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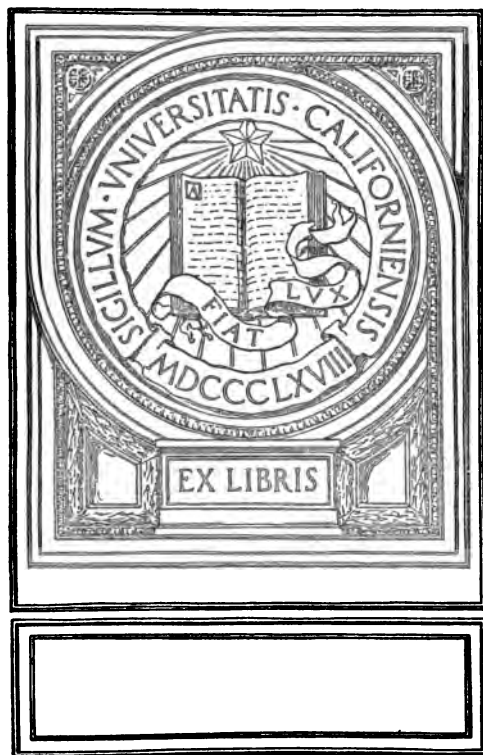
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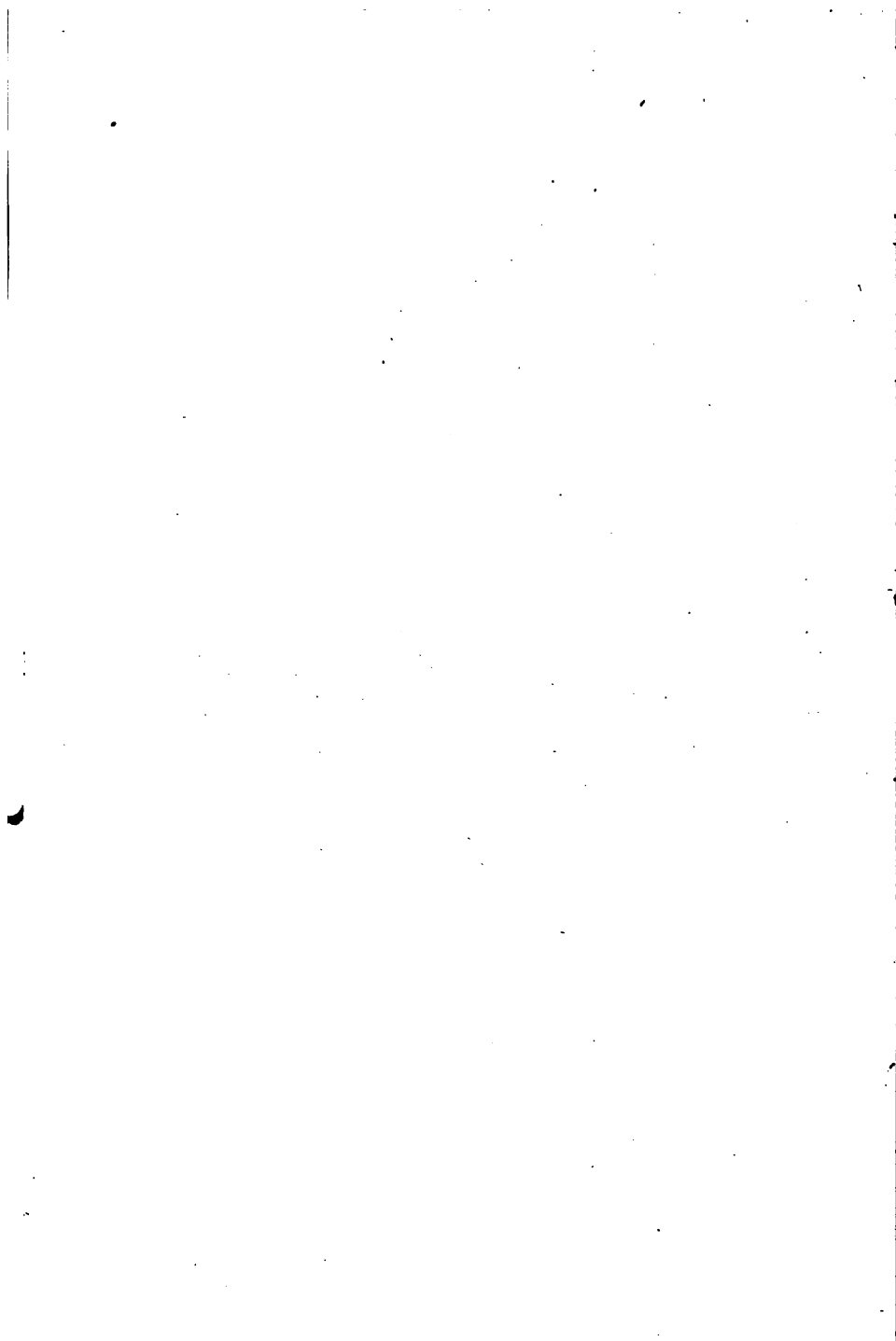
by THOMAS HARDY

"IS IT A MAN?"

by J.M. BARRIE

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STORIES
FROM
"BLACK AND WHITE."

STORIES

FROM

“BLACK AND WHITE”

BY

W. E. NORRIS.
W. CLARKE RUSSELL.
THOMAS HARDY.
MRS. E. LYNN LINTON.
JAMES PAYN.
J. M. BARRIE.
MRS. OLIPHANT.
GRANT ALLEN.

WITH TWENTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON: CHAPMAN & HALL, LD.

1893.

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THE ROMANCE OF MADAME DECHANTELOUP.

By W. E. NORRIS.

I.



W. E. NORRIS.

WELL, after all, I don't know that there was anything so very romantic about the poor woman's story; not much more, at least, than there is in a score of other stories which have come to the knowledge of an old fellow who has lived, and still to some extent lives, in the world, who has kept his eyes and

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ears open, who is a bachelor, and who, for some reason or other, has been honoured by the confidence of numerous fortunate and unfortunate persons. When I come to think of it, I am constrained to admit, somewhat unwillingly, that the ensuing narrative is redeemed from being absolutely commonplace chiefly, if not solely, by the circumstance that Madame de Chanteloup's name—so long as it is remembered at all—will be remembered in connection with that of a reigning monarch. It was not on that account that I personally felt interested in her. In the course of a wandering existence it has been my lot to be brought into contact with many Royalties, and it is a long time since their presence ceased to inspire me with that thrill of awe and admiration which they are able to convey to the great majority of such among their fellow-beings as do not hate them on principle. In the city which for upwards of twenty years has been

my home it is customary to affirm that *Les rois s'en vont*. I do not know whether this is true or not; but if it be the case that the form of government which they represent is in a fair way towards being discarded by civilized nations, I really do believe that they will owe their downfall not so much to any sins of their own, or of those who act under them, as to their striking lack of individuality.

Now, that is a defect which nobody could think of imputing to Madame de Chanteloup. Other shortcomings were, truly or falsely, laid to her charge; but after the affair of early youth which brought her into notoriety, and to which I shall have occasion to refer more particularly by-and-by, all who enjoyed the privilege of her acquaintance were compelled to admit that she was not *la première venue*. Her hastily-arranged marriage with that broken-down scamp the Comte de Chanteloup did not prove a happy one—considering what the cir-

cumstances and what his character and habits were, it could not possibly have turned out otherwise than as it did—but she managed to make herself respected, she managed to rise above reach of the faintest breath of scandal (even Chanteloup himself, when in a melting mood after dinner, used to describe her, with tears in his eyes, as an angel in the disguise of a beautiful woman), and she accomplished a still more difficult feat than that, inasmuch as she contrived to render her modest abode in the Faubourg Saint-Germain one of the most exclusive of Parisian houses. When her husband rid society of a singularly useless and disreputable member by breaking his neck over a fence at Vincennes, she preferred residing all by herself in the land of her adoption to returning to her friends and relatives in England. Perhaps she had not a large number of friends or relatives left; perhaps, if she had, they did not solicit her company as warmly as they might have

done. Upon those points I cannot speak with certainty ; but, having been honoured by admission into the small circle of her Parisian intimates, I can say that we should have been inconsolable had she thought fit to leave us.

After a decent period of mourning, she began to entertain in a quiet way. Her dinners, though unpretending, were irreproachably served ; the guests who gathered round her table were almost always notable from one cause or another, and it was seldom that there was not amongst them at least one who wore a scarlet, a violet, or a black cassock. She was excessively and rigidly pious—more so, perhaps, in her actions than in her words ; although it was very well understood that the free style of conversation which has become so fashionable in the last years of this century must not be indulged in under her roof. To tell the truth, I think we were all a little bit afraid of her. It sounds rather absurd, no doubt, for a man of

my years to talk about being afraid of a woman who might very well have been his granddaughter; but many people must have good reason to be aware that we do not, as a rule, grow braver as we grow older, and Madame de Chanteloup, with her tall figure, her clearly-cut features, her blue eyes, and a certain air of austerity which she knew very well how to assume, really was not a person with whom it would have been safe to take a liberty of any sort or kind. The mere fact of her youth had nothing to say to the matter.

Other juveniles, however, are considerably less formidable, and I certainly felt that my grey hairs gave me a right to say anything that I might deem fitting to young Eyre Pome-roy when he looked me up, one morning, at my modest quarters in the Rue Tronchet just as I was finishing my mid-day breakfast.

"Look here, Mr. Wortley," began this young gentleman, whose well-proportioned frame,

closely-cut black hair and grey eyes would have entitled him to be called handsome even if he had not possessed in other respects the traditional beauty of his race, "I want you to tell me something. I want you to tell me what you know of the Comtesse de Chanteloup's history."

"Oh, is that all?" said I, handing him a cigarette. "Well, I know a good many things about a good many ladies which I don't quite see my way to imparting to an over-grown school-boy like you. Why should I gratify your curiosity with regard to bygone episodes, which Madame de Chanteloup probably would not wish me to allude to, in the presence of those who happen to be ignorant of them?"

"Only because I am going to marry her, I hope, and because she referred me to you," answered my young friend composedly.

"The deuce you are!—and the deuce she did!" I exclaimed; for I was not a little taken aback by an announcement, which was scarcely

less astonishing to me than it would have been to hear that Mr. Pomeroy was about to espouse the Empress Dowager of China. "Mercy upon us! What can have persuaded either you or her to behave in such an unnatural way? I thought you were barely acquainted with her."

He explained that he was better acquainted with her than I imagined, that he had fallen in love with her at first sight (which, if surprising, was at all events not inconceivable), that he had seen her pretty constantly during the few weeks which he had spent in Paris, that he had ended by making her an offer of his hand and heart, and that she had not refused him.

"She did," he added, by way of an after-thought, "make it a *sine quâ non* that I should join the Church of Rome—feeling so strongly as she does upon those subjects, one can't wonder at her having insisted upon that—but I told her I had no objection."

"Oh, indeed!" said I. "That, I suppose,

was a concession too trifling to be worth disputing about. And you live in Donegal, and your father is a prominent Orangeman. Afterwards?"

"Oh, well, if you come to that," returned Mr. Pomeroy, "we're a branch of the Catholic Church—at least, I've always understood that we claimed to be—and, as she says, the whole question narrows itself to one of acknowledging the supreme authority of the Pope——"

"Your father," I interrupted, "doubtless joins once a year, with religious fervour, in the Orange battle-cry of 'To Hell with the Pope!'"

"I don't believe he does anything so disgraceful and uncharitable; and I dare say the Pope is all right—why shouldn't he be? Well, then, afterwards? Afterwards she told me that there were events connected with her past life which might make it impossible for her to marry me, and that I had better go and ask you

what they were. She said you were the sort of old chap who knew all about other people's business."

Of course I was perfectly well aware that Madame de Chanteloup was incapable of having described me in such false and vulgar terms; still it did seem probable that she had wished to cast upon me a task which she had found too painful to undertake on her own account, and the question was whether I was in any way bound to oblige her. Was I to rake up the cinders of a burnt-out scandal for the benefit of this ridiculous youth, who had brought an introduction to me from his father a few weeks before, and who would most undoubtedly be forbidden by his family to contract any such alliance as that upon which he had set his callow affections? Was I to relate how in years gone by there had been—what shall I call it?—a rather pronounced flirtation between Madame de Chanteloup, then a mere slip of

a girl, and the heir-apparent to a certain throne; how there had been a tremendous row about it; how that unconscionable old mother of hers, Mrs. Wilbraham, had threatened to make revelations which could not possibly be permitted; and how, finally, the Comte de Chanteloup had been induced to marry her by the payment of his debts and a large sum of ready money? All things considered, I really did not conceive it to be my duty to do this, and I confined myself to vague references to current rumours, which my young gentleman indignantly scouted.

“What vile lies!” he cried. “I’m glad you don’t state them as truths; but if any man ever dares to say they are true before me—well, I’ll promise him a bad quarter of an hour. How can she have supposed that I should ever waste a second thought upon the calumnies of reptiles, who most likely have never seen her in their lives? Why, no man with eyes in his head

could look at her and doubt that she was as innocent as an infant."

I shrugged my shoulders and held my tongue. I am old, and even when I was young I had no taste for unnecessary quarrels. Besides, what is the use of arguing with a man who is in love? It was as certain as anything could be that Pomeroy's father would never permit him to marry a Papist with a dubious record; and, that being so, I naturally paid little heed to the rhapsodies with which the boy proceeded to favour me. I had heard that kind of thing so many, many times before! What was really interesting and inexplicable was Madame de Chanteloup's conduct in the matter, and I will not deny that I went that evening to a party at which I thought it likely that she might be present for the express purpose of observing her and giving her a chance to enlighten me.

I can't say whether or not she attended that



"WELL," SAID SHE; "AND OF COURSE YOU TOLD HIM—ALL THAT THERE
WAS TO BE TOLD."

party for the express purpose of meeting the reader's humble servant ; but she behaved very much as though that had been her motive, for no sooner had I shaken hands with my hostess than she sailed straight across the room towards me and beckoned me aside, with a certain imperious air which was habitual to her. She was always pale ; but I fancied that she looked rather whiter than usual that evening ; so I opened the conversation by saying : " I am afraid you have one of your neuralgic headaches."

" Yes," she answered ; " I am in great pain, and I have been in great pain all day. That is one reason why I could not see your friend Mr. Pomeroy when he called. He was with you this morning, I presume ? "

I answered that he had been with me, and looked politely interrogative.

" Well," said she ; " and of course you told him—all that there was to be told."

"I am not sure that it was in my power to do that," replied I. "I told him of certain rumours which, as you are aware, are *le secret de Polichinelle*, and I should not have informed him of them if I had not gathered that you wished me to do so."

"Of course I wished you to do so. And what did he say?"

"Oh, he simply snapped his fingers at them. He attached no more importance to calumny than he did to such a trifle as changing his religion at your behest."

A faint tinge of colour came into her cheeks and the slightly severe expression of her face relaxed for a moment. She resumed it, however, in order to remark:

"You are a sceptic" (this was quite untrue, but no matter); "you believe a great deal more in politics than you do in religion, and I should never be able to persuade you that a man who adopts the only true faith is not what

you would call a turncoat. Perhaps it may have been my good fortune to do Mr. Pomeroy one very real service, although it may be impossible for me to grant him all he asks me for."

"Can you really be contemplating such an unscrupulous trick as that?" I exclaimed; "and can you imagine that it has the remotest chance of success?"

She did not deign to answer; but indeed I required no answer. Her face told me plainly enough that she was actually in love with that impetuous youth, and that she wished, if she could, to accept him. I fancied also that she was not less grateful to me than he had been for merely mentioning as reports what I might almost have ventured, but for my cautious disposition, to affirm as ascertained facts. She dismissed me presently with a friendly little motion of her head, and turned to speak to one of the men who had been hovering near her during our short colloquy. I don't mind

acknowledging that I should have been glad if she had been a little more communicative; still I was not altogether sorry that she had refrained from honouring me by asking my advice; for, had she seen fit to do so, I could not, in common honesty and charity, have counselled her to do otherwise than refuse a suitor whom it would have been wiser to refuse in the first instance. She was one of the best and one of the most charming women in the world; but—well, the “buts” appeared to me to be of overwhelming cogency.

Why had she not adopted that easy and obvious plan? Nobody possessing the most elementary acquaintance with her sex would attempt to answer such a question; but, as regards this particular case, I have a theory, which may or may not be correct. I think Madame de Chanteloup was a curiously conscientious woman; I think she would not, under any circumstances, have consented to tell



"I WAS STROLLING DOWN THE CHAMPS ELYSÉES ONE AFTERNOON, . . . WHEN
A PAIR OF EQUESTRIANS CANTERED PAST ME, IN WHOM I RECOGNIZED THE
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a lie; and I suspect that when young Pomeroy asked her point-blank whether she loved him or not, she felt unable to reply in the negative. Being thus situated, she had (or, at least, so I imagined) imposed a couple of trying tests upon him, half hoping, half fearing that they would prove a little too severe for him to face.

Be that as it may, I neither saw nor heard any more of her or of him for a full week. At the expiration of that time I was strolling down the Champs Elysées one afternoon, on my way back from the Bois de Boulogne, where I had been breakfasting with a few friends, when a pair of equestrians cantered past me, in whom I recognized the fair Countess and her impossible adorer. I was sorry to see them together; for, although I knew that Madame de Chanteloup was in the habit of riding every day, and that their meeting might have been purely accidental, I could not but be aware that she would never have

allowed the young fellow to join her if she had not contemplated granting him greater privileges than that; and really, for her own sake, it would have been so very much better to grant him no privileges at all.

That my forebodings were only too well founded was proved to me long ere I reached the Place de la Concorde. Young Pomeroy came galloping back, jumped off his horse, and, gripping me by the arm, said—

“Congratulate me, Mr. Wortley! I know you’re a true friend of hers, as well as of mine, and I’m sure you’ll be glad to hear that it’s all right.”

“Do you mean,” I inquired, “that you have obtained your father’s consent to your marriage?”

“My father’s consent?—good gracious me, no! As if I had had any excuse to ask him for it! But I have obtained hers, which is a good deal more to the purpose. She says she’s

willing to trust me if I am willing to trust her; she says that if I will consent to be received into her Church, and if I will never allude again to that—that infernal blasphemy (for I really can't call it by any other name) which you mentioned to me the other day——”

“And which, of course, you are prepared to treat with the contempt that it deserves,” I interjected.

“My dear sir, am I a born fool?”

I thought it extremely probable that he was; but I was too polite to say so, and he went on—

“Is it likely that, knowing her as I do, I should believe there was even the remotest possibility of her ever having done anything of which she ought to be ashamed? Is it likely that I should wish to insult her by prying into bygones which she would rather not talk about? Do you suppose I should enjoy relating to her the whole history of my own past

life? And what business have I to refuse her an indulgence which I claim for myself?"

He proceeded to point out, at great length, and in glowing language, how infinitely higher, nobler, and purer Madame de Chanteloup must needs be than himself. I was not concerned to contradict him; I do not assert, and never have asserted, that the world's estimate of what is pardonable in a man and unpardonable in a woman is intrinsically just; only, as we live in the world, we must take it as we find it; and I confess that I was a little disappointed in Madame de Chanteloup, who, I thought, might have spared this youthful enthusiast the inevitable shock which awaited him.

However, as I said before, nobody who understands women, however imperfectly, attempts to account for their conduct, and I own that my heart became softened towards the woman who is the subject of this sketch when I met her, the next day, at the entrance of the

church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, where, I suppose, she had been saying her prayers. I was tolerably well acquainted with her features, for which, indeed, I had always had a very sincere and profound admiration; but at that moment they wore an expression which was wholly unfamiliar to me, and which somehow made her look like what I imagined she must have looked like as a child. The poor woman was happy, in fact; Heaven knows that her life had not hitherto been favoured with any too large a share of happiness!

I don't remember what I said to her—something congratulatory and commonplace, no doubt—but it did not matter what I said, for she evidently was not listening to me. Only, as I was helping her into her brougham, she grasped my hand with unusual warmth, and exclaimed, "Ah, Mr. Wortley, the world is not so bad as we try to make it out. There are noble and generous hearts even among men."

I was not aware of having ever maintained the contrary; but I was sorely afraid that she would be driven into doing so before long; for Eyre Pomeroy, however noble and generous he might be, was dependent upon his father, and it was hardly in the nature of things that his father's nobility and generosity should display themselves in the especial form of which she appeared to be thinking. Still, if my fullest sympathy and my best wishes could have done her any good, they would have been as much at her service as I myself was. Unhappily, neither I nor my sympathy could obliterate an episode of which every proof and detail was easily procurable.

II.

I NEED scarcely say that the news of the Comtesse de Chanteloup's betrothal to her young compatriot, and of the latter's impend-

ing admission into the bosom of the Holy Roman Church, was very soon bruited abroad ; nor is it necessary for me to add that this unexpected piece of intelligence set many tongues in motion. I suppose Pomeroy told everybody ; probably the Countess herself was too proud to keep silence ; anyhow, all Paris was placed in possession of the fact, and very sorry I was that all Paris should thus be entitled to make observations which, had they been reported to the persons chiefly concerned, could hardly have failed to cause them pain. For my own part, I am not ashamed to acknowledge that I hoped the boy would stand to his guns, seeing that, if the worst came to the worst, and his family cast him adrift, his wife's fortune would suffice to keep him and her out of want. He was only a boy, after all, and no doubt, if I had been his father, I should have done my utmost to restrain him from rashly compromising his whole future career ; but I

was not his father; I was both powerless and irresponsible, and I could not for the life of me help inwardly espousing the cause of poor Madame de Chanteloup.

One afternoon an event for which I had been fully prepared took place. My servant brought me a card, which bore the name of Sir Francis Pomeroy, and announced that the gentleman was waiting to hear whether I would receive him. Of course I had to send out a request that he would do me the honour to come in. I did not know much about him; I had met him perhaps half a dozen times in years gone by. I was intimate with some of his relations, and I had written a polite reply to the letter of introduction which had been delivered to me by his son. It seemed probable that he had now come to upbraid me for having led his son into a *guet-apens*. However, the tall, spare, grey-headed gentleman who was presently ushered into my presence proved as

reasonable in behaviour as he was courteous in manner.

“I have taken the liberty of calling upon you before letting Eyre know of my arrival, Mr. Wortley,” he began, “because it will make an unpleasant task somewhat easier for me if I can obtain beforehand from a disinterested source some account of this unfortunate entanglement of his. You will allow that it is an unfortunate entanglement?”

“I don’t know that I should describe it as an entanglement,” I replied. “I suppose I must call it unfortunate by reason of certain rumours which are tolerably notorious, and which may even have reached your ears.”

“They have not only reached my ears,” said Sir Francis, composedly, “but I have taken pains to verify them. I have been at our Embassy to-day, and also at the —— Legation” (for obvious reasons I suppress the nationality of the Legation that he mentioned),

“and the result is that I have been allowed to see documents which place the affair altogether out of the category of rumours. There it all is in black and white—the private or semi-private instructions of the Prince’s Government, the pressure brought to bear by our own people, the Comte de Chanteloup’s demands, and his formal acknowledgment of the receipt of a sum of money for a specific purpose. I was not, it is true, allowed to take copies of these papers, and I was warned that they could never be made public ; but, of course, nothing of that kind is necessary for my purpose. What I have seen amply justifies me in saying that I cannot permit my son to marry a woman with such a record as Madame de Chanteloup’s. I won’t speak of his proposed change of religion. It is a subject upon which I feel strongly ; but the point really doesn’t arise, and need not be alluded to. My only wish is not to make myself more disagreeable to Eyre than I can

help; so I should be glad if you wouldn't mind telling me whether he is ignorant of the circumstances, and whether, in that event, you had any good reason for keeping him in ignorance of them."

This was a little awkward, but I made out as good a case as I could for myself, and I tried also—though I knew it would be useless—to make out as good a case as I could for Madame de Chanteloup. Sir Francis listened to me with perfect politeness and good temper; he even expressed sympathy with the unfortunate lady, who, he said, might very likely have been more sinned against than sinning.

"Only, of course," he added, "it's out of the question for my son to marry her."

"You mean," I could not help observing, "that you will forbid him to marry her. Isn't it possible, though, that he may insist upon marrying her, notwithstanding your prohibition?"

“Such a thing is possible, but I cannot think it at all likely. You see, Mr. Wortley, both you and Madame de Chanteloup have—well, I won’t say you have deceived him; but at all events you haven’t enlightened him. It devolves upon me to do that, and, painful though the duty is, I should be inexcusable if I evaded it.”

I could not urge him to refrain from doing what any father would have done in his place; but I did venture to remind him that he was not quite entitled to speak of Madame de Chanteloup as a woman of damaged reputation. “When all is said,” I remarked, “there remains a doubt, and I think she might be allowed the benefit of it.”

“I have no wish to be uncharitable,” answered Sir Francis, getting up; “but what there cannot be the slightest doubt about is that the Comte de Chanteloup was paid to marry this lady, that the money was provided by the

father of the present king, and that Mrs. Wilbraham threatened to make damaging disclosures if the required sum was not forthcoming. From those undisputed facts most people would say that only one conclusion could be drawn."

I was not under any illusion as to what most people would say, and in fact did say, about this melancholy business ; yet I felt pretty sure that Eyre Pomeroy would prove less amenable to reason than his father expected him to be. It is perhaps a mistake to be generous and unsuspicious, and I myself may be too old to be either the one or the other ; still I admire those qualities in my juniors, and although, as I have said, I had been a little disappointed in Madame de Chanteloup for accepting Eyre, I should have been still more disappointed in him if the revelation which he was about to hear had induced him to break with her. At the same time, it will be readily understood that I did not see my way to lending countenance or

encouragement to filial rebellion ; so that when, some hours later, my young friend was announced, I began at once by saying—

“ If you have come here to ask me to intercede for you with your father, you have come upon a vain errand. I warned you from the first, remember, that you would have trouble with him, and now you must fight your own battle.”

“ I haven’t come upon any errand of that kind, Mr. Wortley,” answered the young man gravely and sadly, “ and there is no quarrel between me and the governor, who, I must say, has been as—as considerate as it was possible to be. More considerate, perhaps, than some other people.”

His tone was so absolutely the reverse of what I had anticipated, that I was fairly taken aback, and, to tell the truth, rather angered into the bargain.

“ Meaning me ? ” I inquired.

“ Well,” answered the young man, seating

himself—and I noticed that there was a drawn look about his face, while all the healthy colour had deserted it—"I think you might have been more candid with me. I can't help saying that I think I might have been more candidly dealt with. If it had been a question of mere gossip, I should have had nothing to complain of; but I don't quite understand my having been allowed to remain in ignorance as to matters of fact."

"Why, God bless my soul, sir!" I exclaimed (for in the days of my youth I had a hasty temper, of which some traces still linger within me), "do you venture to rebuke me because I didn't poke my nose into the byways of diplomacy in order to blacken the fair fame of the very best woman with whom I have the honour to be acquainted? Who are you, pray, that I should stab a friend in the back to save you from committing an act of folly upon which you were bent? You intend, I

take it, to break faith with Madame de Chanteloup. Very well; only, if you are in any degree a gentleman, you will account for your abandonment of her by affirming what, I should think, was perfectly true—that your father's stalwart Protestantism won't admit of a matrimonial alliance between his heir and a Romanist."

The young fellow did not respond to my outburst by any counter-demonstration. "There is no use in using strong language, Mr. Wortley," said he, in the same calm, despairing voice. "I am as unhappy as you could possibly wish me to be; but I am not ashamed. If what my father has told me is true—and I am afraid that is beyond question—I can no more think of marrying the woman whom I love than I could think of disgracing myself and my family in any other way. Surely that must be obvious to you! And I don't think it would be honest on my part to give her any

reason except the real one for what you call my abandonment of her."

He was undeniably and exasperatingly in the right. "As you please," I returned. "I can only say to you, as I have said to your father, that there is a doubt, and that, in my opinion, Madame de Chanteloup ought to be allowed the benefit of it. However, it really doesn't signify; because you don't mean to marry her—and, for the matter of that, I never believed that you would. And now, as I have an engagement to keep, and as I presume that you have nothing more to say, I will ask you to be so kind as to excuse me."

But it seemed that he had something more to say; it seemed—to put things coarsely—that he was desirous of employing me as a go-between, and that he thought I might spare him some pain by taking a message from him to Madame de Chanteloup. I need scarcely add that I emphatically declined to be employed in any such capacity.

"You have ridden at a fence which you are afraid to take," said I; "personally I don't care a straw whether you shirk it or break your neck over it. It is no business of mine to find you in courage, or to see you through difficulties."

"I must write to her, then," he replied, meekly. "You may call me a coward if you like; but I daren't trust myself to see her."

So he went his way; and I confess that, after he had departed, my conscience reproached me a little for the severity with which I had treated him. He was not really behaving so very badly; he really had been deceived, and I suppose it was the case that he owed some sacrifice of his personal inclinations to expediency and to the honour of the good old family whose name he bore. Still I could not forget my poor Countess's radiant face as I had seen it when she emerged from St. Germain

l'Auxerrois, and I could not for one instant believe that she had ever been a bad woman, though hard facts demonstrated that she had been what, to all worldly intents and purposes, is the same thing.

On the following afternoon I called at her house. I can't exactly say what my object was in so doing, nor had I any expectation that I could be of the slightest use to her in her distress ; but, having heard nothing of or from young Pomeroy during the morning, and being by no means sure that he would not leave Paris without even bidding me good-bye, I yielded to the feeling of restless uneasiness which had oppressed me ever since the conclusion of my interview with him. If the reader likes to assume that I was prompted by mere vulgar curiosity, I make the reader welcome to that assumption : it would not be the first time that such a charge has been brought against me.

Anyhow, my curiosity was not gratified, for I failed to obtain admission into Madame de Chanteloup's drawing-room. Madame la Comtesse, the servant informed me, was *très-souffrante*; she had had one of her bad neuralgic headaches all day, and had now gone to bed, giving orders that she was on no account to be disturbed until the evening. So I handed him my card, mentioned that I would return to make inquiries on the morrow, and went my way to the club, where I remained until the clock warned me that it was time to go home and dress for a dinner-party to which I had been bidden.

A *fiacre* was turning away from my door just as I reached it, and when I was about half-way upstairs I overtook Eyre Pomeroy, who was clinging to the banisters and who seemed scarcely able to put one foot before another.

"What is the matter?" I exclaimed, taking

him by the arm ; “ what has happened ? ”—for I saw by his ghastly face that some catastrophe must have occurred.

“ What has happened ? ” he repeated, in a strange thick voice. “ Haven’t you heard ?—no, of course you haven’t. She is dead, that’s all—yes, *dead* ! I don’t know whether you can believe it or not ; *I* can’t, though there isn’t a doubt about its being true.”

To the best of my recollection, I did not believe it. I thought the lad must have been drinking, or that he was the victim of some hallucination. He was, at all events, incapable of expressing himself coherently. It was only after I had got him into an arm-chair and had made him swallow a couple of glasses of wine that he recovered the use of his tongue ; and even then he remained so painfully agitated that I had difficulty in understanding what he said. I gathered, however, that he had, on the previous evening, written such a letter to

Madame de Chanteloup as he had intimated his intention of writing.

"I received her answer," he said, "an hour—or perhaps it was two hours ago. Here it is; read it, and you will see—you will see——"

His voice broke, and it was some seconds before he could resume: "Of course, I rushed at once to her house. There was a great disturbance there. I didn't understand what it was about; but they tried to keep me back, and I forced my way in. All the doors were open; the servants were in her bedroom, sobbing and chattering; I think there was a policeman there too; I saw her lying on the bed, dead and cold. She had been ill and had taken an over-dose of chloral, they said. I think I had better kill myself too; for you will see by her letter that she was innocent and that I murdered her!"

I quieted him as best I could; but naturally



"ALL THE DOORS WERE OPEN; THE SERVANTS WERE IN HER BEDROOM, SOBBING AND CHATTERING; I THINK THERE WAS A POLICEMAN THERE TOO; I SAW HER LYING ON THE BED, DEAD AND COLD."

I myself was somewhat overcome, and even if I had had all my wits about me I don't know that I could have said very much to comfort him. Presently he sank back in his chair and motioned to me to read the letter which he had placed in my hand.

I need not quote the whole of it; indeed, I am not sure that, had he been calmer, he would have cared to let me see the opening sentences, which conveyed an assurance of such passionate love as I should scarcely have supposed Madame de Chanteloup capable of penning, and which, even at that sad moment, I could not help wondering at his having had the power to arouse. But, notwithstanding this—or possibly on account of it—the writer acquiesced without a murmur in the sentence which had been pronounced against her, acknowledging that it was inevitable, and only marvelling that she had ever imagined that it might be averted.

“Still,” she added, “now that all is over between us, and since you cannot, I think, suspect me of any wish to bring you back to me, I should like you to know that the truth is not quite so bad as you have been led to believe. The Prince paid me great attentions, and my vanity was flattered by them; I liked him very much, though I did not love him; I was scarcely more than a child; I knew nothing of the world, and when he used to talk about a morganatic marriage I saw no impossibility in such an arrangement. Indeed, so far as I had any voice in the matter, I had consented to this when, all of a sudden, I was told that he had gone away, that I should never see him again, that he had even been placed under a sort of arrest, and—that I was to marry M. de Chanteloup. Of course I was very unhappy; but I had always been completely under the control of my mother, who told me this was not a case for argument, that

she had done the very best she could for me, and that I must bow to necessity. It was not until after my marriage that I learnt from my husband by what infamous means the transaction which handed me over to him had been brought about. I don't speak of my mother's share in it. She was ambitious; in her eagerness to make what she considered a magnificent alliance for me she probably committed herself to false statements which may afterwards have been used against her, and from which she could find no honourable way of escape. At any rate, my husband's revelation came far too late to save or serve me. If I had proclaimed my true story from the house-tops, not one person in a thousand would have believed it. But *you*, I hope, will believe it, and forgive the wrong I was so nearly doing you, as I have forgiven those who have ruined my life."

There was a good deal more; but I could

only glance at the remainder of the letter; for young Pomeroy had started up from his recumbent attitude, and his cold, trembling fingers were laid upon my wrist.

"Well?" said he, impatiently. "Speak out—don't be afraid of hurting me. Do you think she did it?"

I was astonished at the question. "Why," I exclaimed, "you yourself told me just now that you were persuaded of her innocence, and I must confess——"

"No, no!" he interrupted, fretfully; "you don't understand me. As if I would let you dare to cast a doubt upon her innocence! What I mean is, do you—do you think she killed herself?"

I could only say, as I had said in a previous instance, that I thought she should be allowed the benefit of the doubt. That is all that I can say or think now; and although Eyre Pomeroy would have been better pleased, I suppose,

if I could have given him the more positive assurance which he craved, he did not, presumably, consider that the circumstances would justify him in fulfilling his own threat of self-destruction.

Far from acting so foolishly and wickedly, he has lately gratified his family by making a highly satisfactory marriage, and I should not imagine that he has revisited Père Lachaise since the dismal, rainy day when he followed poor Madame de Chanteloup's remains to their last resting-place in that dreariest of all burial grounds.

A MEMORABLE SWIM.

By W. CLARKE RUSSELL.



W. CLARKE RUSSELL.

THE little sitting-room, at whose open window I was seated, was very hot; from the lodgings on either hand there broke into the quietude of the night a horrid, distracting noise of jingling pianos, accompanied by a squealing of female voices. The hour was about eleven. I filled my pipe afresh, left the house, and walked in the direction of the beach.

The moon rode high; I had never before seen the orb so small and also so brilliantly piercing; she diffused a wide haze of greenish

silver round about her in the heavens, in the skirts of which a few stars of magnitude shone sparsely, though, clear of the sphere of this steam-like radiance, the sky trembled with brilliants, and went hovering to the sea-line, rich with prisms and crystals. In the heart of the silent ocean lay the fan-shaped wake of the moon, and the splendour of its hither extremity, so wide-reaching was it, seemed to melt in the lines of summer surf, which formed and dissolved upon the wet-darkened sand.

It wanted about a quarter of an hour to the turn of the ebb. The sands were a broad, firm platform, and stretched before and behind me, whitened into the complexion of ivory by the moonbeams. The cliffs rose tall and dark on my left, a silent range of iron terraces, with the black sky-line of them showing out against the stars, and with nothing to break their continuity save here and there a gap, as of some ravine. The summer-night hush was

exquisitely soothing. From afar came the thin, faint notes of a band of music playing in the town, past the huge shoulder of cliff, but the distance was too great to suffer the strains to vex the ear; indeed, the silence was accentuated rather than disturbed by that far-off music. The creeping of the surf was like the voice of innumerable fountains. There was not a breath of air; the moon's reflections lay tremorless; and in the liquid dusk on the western edge of that motionless path of light floated the phantom shape of a ship, her hull as black as ink, and her sails stirlessly poised over her, like ice in shadow.

I walked dreamily onwards, smoking my pipe, and listening to the innumerable babble of the waters upon the beach. I went perhaps a mile. There was plenty of time; no hurry to go to bed on such a night, and there would be abundance of room for the walk home, long after the tide should have turned.

I came abreast of a mass of black rock, table-shaped, and nearly awash ; that is to say, the water stood almost at the level of it, so that at flood it would be submerged and out of sight. I spied what I thought to be a gleam of light resting upon it ; but on looking again I was sure that that strange shining could not be moonlight, for the lustre was local, and it was not light either, but white, and its size was about that of a man's body ; and, indeed, it looked so much like a naked man that I drew close to examine it. There was dry sand to the rock ; but the water brimmed very nearly around it, and there was water under where the white object lay. On drawing near, I observed that what I had thought to be a gleam of light was the body of a drowned man. I stood staring long enough to satisfy me that he was dead. It was a dismal and a dreadful object to light upon. The very silence of the night, the beauty of the stars,

the high, peaceful, piercing moon somehow increased the horror of the thing. On a dark, stormy night, I do not know that such a spectacle would have so shocked and unnerved me as this now did.

I peered to right and left, but not the shadow of mortal being stirred upon the white sweep of the sands. Then, casting my eyes up at the cliff, I recollected that a little distance further on there was a gully, at the head of which stood a coastguard's hut, and, knowing that there would be a man stationed on the look-out up there, I forthwith bent my steps in the direction of the gully, and ascended it, until I arrived at the hut. Here I found a coastguard. He eyed me fixedly as I approached him.

I said, "Good night, coastguard."

"Good night," he answered, attentively surveying me by the light of the moon.

"I am somewhat breathless," said I; "I have

walked fast, and that gully is hard to climb. There is a dead body down on the beach."

"Whereabouts, sir?" he exclaimed with the instant promptitude of the seaman, and he advanced to the edge of the cliff.

"It lies on that rock there," said I, pointing.

"I see it, sir," said he. "D'ye mind coming along with me? My mate won't be here for a bit."

Together we proceeded to the sands. The coastguard got upon the rock and stood viewing the body. Then, catching hold of it by the arms, he dragged it gently on to the sand.

"Ay," said he; "I thought as much. This'll be the gent as was drowned whilst bathing out of a boat yesterday. Poor fellow! he's left a wife and two children. There's been a reward of twenty pounds offered for his body. That'll be yourn, sir."

"It will be yours," said I. "I do not stand in need of money earned in this fashion."

The body was that of a man of about thirty. He had fair hair and a large moustache, and in life had doubtless been a handsome young fellow.

"'Tain't often as they comes ashore so perfect," said the coastguard. "They're 'mostly all ate up so as to be unrecognizable."

I recoiled, and said, "Why am I afraid of this body? It cannot hurt me. It is but a dead man, and comely too. Why, as he lies there, coastguard, he might be formed of ivory, moulded by the fingers of the sea out of its own foam, and cast up thus. And yet," said I, looking round with a silly, chilly shiver running through me, "I believe it would go near to unsettling my wits were I forced to stand watch by this body all through the night here."

"I see he's got his rings on," said the matter-of-fact coastguard, stooping to bring his eyes close to the fingers of the body.

“What is now to be done?” said I.

“Which way might you be going, sir?”

“Home—back to the town,” I replied; “I’ve walked enough by the sea-shore to-night.”

“Then,” said the coastguard, “I’ll ask you to report this here discovery to the first bobby ye meets with. Tell him that the body lies almost abreast of Downton Gap; and, if you don’t mind giving me a hand, sir, to carry the corpse to the foot of the cliff, in case the bobby—the tide ye see——”

“No,” said I; “you dragged it single-handed from the rock. You are able to drag it single-handed to the foot of the cliff. If I touched the poor thing—well, good night, coastguard,” and I walked off, leaving him to handle the dead body single-handed, for which I had no better excuse to make than that I was possessed at the time by strong feelings of horror, and perhaps fear, which the presence of the coastguard in no degree

mitigated, and which were induced, as I can now believe, by the suddenness and violence of the obtrusion of an object of terror upon my mind at a moment when it had been rendered in a peculiar sense unprepared for any such experience by the enervating charm, the sweet relaxing magic of the soft and glorious night of moonshine and silence, and waters seething with the stealthy hiss of champagne.

I stepped out briskly, and as I walked I seemed to behold many white bodies of drowned men floating shorewards on the summer feathering of the little breakers. When I arrived at the town I met a policeman, to whom I communicated the news, and I then returned to my lodgings and sat in the open window smoking a pipe, and as I lighted my pipe the clocks in the town struck the hour of midnight.

As I sat smoking thus, I surrendered my

mind so wholly to contemplation of the dead white body I had suddenly fallen in with, that I might well have supposed the impression which the encounter would leave must be life-long. But next day I returned to London, and within a week the memory of the little incident had as good as perished from my mind. For a month I was very busy. My employment was exceedingly arduous, and often obliged me to work late into the night. Then, at the expiration of the month, feeling uncommonly fagged, I resolved to spend a week at the same seaside town where I had discovered the body on the rock.

The name of this town I will not give. I do not wish to excite the anger of its boatmen. "Ho!" they will say, should I name their town. "Ho!" they will cry when they have arrived at the end of my story, "what a loy! This here piece is put into the newspapers all along o' spite. The gent don't wish us

well, and he's invented this here blooming yarn to scare folks from employing of us. He's agoing to start a pleasure yacht for taking o' people out at a shilling a head, and don't mean that us pore watermen shall get a living." Thus would you declaim, oh, ye sons of the beach; and that you may in no wise suffer from any statements of mine, I withhold the name of your town, so that the reader may take his choice of any port or harbour on the coast of the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, what I am about to relate is no "loy," but the truth itself—absolute, memorable, living. .

I was again at the seaside. It was now the month of August, and the hottest August that I can remember. After the intolerable heat of London, and the fatigue of my work there, nothing, of course, could prove so beneficial, so bracing, in all senses so restoring, as sea-bathing. But for the bathing-machine sea-bath I had the strongest aversion. First, there was

no depth of water for swimming. The necessary depth for true enjoyment was to be gained only when the limbs were well-nigh exhausted by the labour of striking out for it. Then I disliked to bathe in company. Again, I objected to the crowds who stood watching the bathers from the piers and sands. In fact, for an expert swimmer, such as I, there is but one method of bathing in the sea: he must take a boat, row out a mile or two where the brine sparkles foamless, where it is clear of the contamination of the set of the inshore tide, where the blue or green of it is darkly pure with depth.

On the morning following the day of my arrival, somewhere about the hour of seven o'clock, I threw some towels over my arm and walked down to a part of the harbour where I knew I should find a boatman. Even at this early hour the bite of the sun was as fierce as though he stood at his meridian. The atmosphere was of a brilliant blue. There was a

little air of wind that delicately rippled the sea. I beheld not a cloud in the sky—no, not so much as a shred of vapour of the size of a man's hand. In the harbour the red canvas of smacks preparing to go to sea painted the water under them. The soft wind brought many wholesome odours of tar, of sea-weed, of sawn timber to the nostrils. As I approached that part of the pier off which most of the wherries belonging to the town were congregated, a man who was leaning with his back to me over a stone post, gazing in the direction of the sands, turned his head, and, guessing at my intention, by observing the towels I carried, stood erect with alacrity, and called out "Boat, sir? The werry morning for a swim, sir. A sheet calm, and the flood's only now agoing to make."

Though I had from time to time visited the town, I had never spent more than three days at a time in it; and the boatmen, therefore, were strangers to me. I said to this man :—

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"Yes, it is the very morning for a swim. What sort of a boat is yours?"

"The best boat in the harbour, sir," he answered. "There she lies, sir—a real beauty," and he pointed eagerly at a wherry painted blue, with raised tholepins, after the fashion of the boats of the Thames watermen.

I looked at her and said, "Yes, she will do very well to take a header from. Bring her alongside."

It was not until I was seated in the stern-sheets of the boat that I particularly noticed this waterman, who, having flung his oars over, was propelling his little craft through the water with a velocity that was warrant of an extraordinarily powerful arm. My eyes then resting upon his face, I found myself struck by his uncommon appearance. His skin was very dark, his hair jet-black, and his eyes were of a glassy brilliance, with pupils of jet. Coarse as his hair was, it curled in ringlets. He wore a pair of

immensely thick whiskers, every fibre of which might have been plucked from a horse's tail. His nose was heavy and large, and the curve of the nostrils very deeply graven. In each ear was a thick gold hoop, and the covering of his head consisted of a cap fashioned out of a skin. Otherwise he was habited in the familiar garb of the British boatman—in a blue jersey, large loose trousers, of a yellow stuff called "fear-naught;" top-boots under the trousers, which were turned up to reveal a portion of the leather. I observed that his gaze had an odd character of staring; it was fixed, stern, yet with a suggestion of restlessness in it, as of temper.

"Are you a Jew?" said I.

"No fear," he answered.

"Do not suppose that I ask the question out of any disrespect to you. The Jews are a very intelligent, interesting people. It would cause me to wonder, however, to find a Jew a boatman."

"I ain't no Jew, sir," said he.

"Perhaps you are what is called a Romany Chal?"

"What's that?" he cried, gazing at me with his staring eyes.

"A gipsy, isn't it?"

He grinned, and answered, "Well, I believe I has some pikey blood in me."

"What do you mean by pikey?"

"Gipsy," said he.

"That must be a local term," said I, "probably derived from the word 'turnpike,' as connecting the gipsies with the road."

He strained at his oars in silence; but my questions appeared to have excited some curiosity in him as to myself, for I observed that he ran his eyes over me, dwelling with attention upon every part of my apparel, more especially, as it struck me, upon the rings upon my fingers, and upon my watch chain.

I stood up to look around. We were clear of

the harbour ; and the fine scene of the cliffs, the houses on top, with their flashing windows, the white lustrous line of sands, lay stretched before my sight. We were the only small boat upon the surface of the sea ; but near the pier were a number of bathing-machines, and several dark knots of heads like cocoanuts bobbed in the snow-bright lines of the surf. The horizon was broken by the outlines of a few vessels, and one large steamer gliding stately and resplendent, flashes of white fire, like exploding guns, breaking from the double line of her glazed portholes as her movements brought those windows to the sun, gleams of ruddy flame leaping from the polished brass furniture about her bridge, and a long line of water glancing astern of her, as though she towed from her sternpost some league-long length of shimmering white satin.

“What might be the correct time, sir?” asked the boatman.

I drew out my watch, a handsome gold repeater, and gave him the hour. He thanked me, and said, "I suppose you're a good swimmer, sir?"

"I am a very good swimmer," I answered.

"Then the deeper the water, the better you'll be pleased, sir. I've been told that arter six fadom of water every funder fadom makes a man feel so much more buoyant that it's like strapping a fresh bladder on to him."

"No doubt," said I. "What depths have you here?"

"Oh, here," cried he, contemptuously glancing over the side, "why, there ain't twelve foot of water here. We're right on top of a bank. Ye'll need to let me pull you about a mile and a half out to get the soundings you want for a first-class swim."

"Well," said I, "there is no hurry. You know all about these waters, of course? By the way, when I was here a month ago I

found a drowned body on the sands down there."

"Oh, was you the gent, then, as fell in with that body?" said the man, regarding me with his peculiar gipsy stare. "There was a matter of twenty pound offered for that discovery. Wish *I'd* had the finding of the poor fellow. Twenty pound. Only think. And it was all paid over to a coastguard."

"That's right," said I. "I walked up that break in the cliffs yonder to the coastguard's hut there and gave notice. Who was the drowned man, do you know?"

"It came out in the cronner's 'quest, but I forget the name."

"How was he drowned?"

"Why, by awading out of his depth, I allow."

"The coastguard told me he was drowned by bathing from a boat."

"He didn't know nothen about it," answered the boatman. "There never yet was a man

drowned by bathing out of a boat in these parts. Didn't ye see the account of the 'quest in the newspapers?"

"No."

"Well," said the man, "it was supposed he was took with cramp. There's too many drowning jobs of that sort going on along the coast. It don't do us watermen any good. It creates a prejudice agin the places where the accidents happen. What does a man want to go out of his depth for if he ain't no swimmer?"

We fell silent, and he continued to row with great energy, whilst I lay back in the stern-sheets enjoying the sweet cool freshness of the salt air breathing upon the face of the waters, and greatly enjoying the noble and brilliant spectacle of the sea shining under the sun, and of the coast, whose many colours, and whose many features of structure, of elbow, of cliff, of green slope, of down on top, every stroke

of the oar was now making more tender, more delicate, more toy-like.

After rowing for about twenty minutes, the gipsy-faced boatman rested upon his oars, and, taking a look round, and then gazing over the side into the water, he exclaimed, "This here'll be the spot, sir."

I at once undressed, stood up in the stern-sheets, put my hands together, and went overboard into the cool, green, glass-clear profound. I came to the surface, and, with a shake of the head, cleared my eyes, and perceived the boatman very leisurely pulling his wherry still further out to sea. This was, perhaps, as it should be. He might, indeed, have headed his boat in for the land; but, in any case, he was right to keep her in motion as an invitation to me to swim after her. I swam with great enjoyment; the embrace of the water penetrated to my inmost being, and every pulse in me beat with a new vitality. I swam

directly in the wake of the boat, past the rim of whose stern I could see the head of the boatman. He held me in view, and he watched me intently, though from time to time he would direct his gaze to that part of the land where the town was situated, and sometimes he would turn his head and look behind him—that is to say, over the bows of his boat, in the manner of one who cannot satisfy himself that something is not approaching.

Presently, I thought I would catch hold of the boat by the gunwale to rest myself, and I called to him to stop rowing, that I might come up with him; but he did not stop rowing. When I called he turned his face from me, and continued to ply his oars. I called to him again, but he paid no attention to me. There was the sullen air of murder in his averted face, and in his whole manner of determination not to hear me. My heart beat furiously, and I felt faint, for *now*, with the velocity of

thought, I was linking the fate of the man whose dead body I had lighted upon with the gipsy ruffian ahead of me in the boat; and I said to myself, he might have been drowned, and perhaps by that very demon there, as I



"I CALLED TO HIM TO STOP ROWING, THAT I MIGHT COME UP TO HIM; BUT HE DID NOT STOP ROWING."

am to be drowned; left, as I am to be left, to swim until he sank from exhaustion, as I am to sink, that the boatman might possess himself of his watch and chain and money, as my

watch and chain and money are the objects for which I am to be obliged to struggle here until I perish.

These thoughts swept with the speed of a dream through my head. I cried aloud in a voice of bitter despair—as acutely realizing now the murderous villain’s intention as though I had spent an hour in digesting it—“For God’s sake, do not leave me here to drown. Take what you want; take all that I have. Have mercy upon me. Let me reach your boat and rest!”

He continued to row, with his face averted from me, and I was near enough to him to easily observe the villainous, diabolical expression that now sat upon his dark countenance as he stared in silence towards the land. I turned upon my back to rest myself, and all the while my feverishly-beating heart seemed to be saying, “What is to be done? Must you drown? You are not two miles from the

shore. Cannot you swim that distance? Rest awhile on your back, and then strike out like a man. You have no other chance for your life. That demon yonder intends that you shall drown. He will secrete the booty he means to take out of your pockets, and will row ashore and put on a face of consternation, and report that when you were overboard you were seized with cramp, and sank on a sudden like a stone."

Whilst I thus lay upon my back, besieged by the most dreadful thoughts, half mad with wrath and with despair, the boatman sculled back to me, and, putting the blade of his left oar upon my breast, thrust with it with the idea of submerging me. I grasped the oar, and held it with the tenacity of a dying man. He could not shake me off; his right oar slipped from his hand and went overboard; the boat swayed dangerously. My desire, indeed, was to capsize it, because I should have the ruffian



“——AND, PUTTING THE BLADE OF HIS LEFT OAR UPON MY BREAST,
THRUST WITH IT WITH THE IDEA OF SUBMERGING ME.”

at an advantage if I could get him into the water, heavily clad as he was, even though he should be as expert a swimmer as I; and then there would be the boat to hold to, because, being light and without ballast, even if she filled she would not sink; furthermore, there was the certainty of our situation being witnessed from the coast, and of help being despatched forthwith.

It might have been that he feared the boat would capsize, and it might have been that he guessed we should be presently observed through some telescope levelled at us from the pier or cliff. He suddenly cried with a furious curse, "Get in, get in!" and, letting go his oar, he dragged me into the boat, flinging me from him, so that I fell over an after thwart, and lay for a few moments breathless, and almost unconscious, in the bottom of the boat. He then threw his oar over and manœuvred the wherry, so as to re-

cover the other oar, which done, he adjusted himself on his seat and fell to rowing on a course parallel with the coast.

I rose, trembling in every limb; the shock had been terrible; my rescue a miracle. I seemed to feel the hand of death cold upon my heart, even as I staggered on to my feet; and still I was in dire peril—alone with a powerful, muscular ruffian, who, having already attempted my life, might again, in self-defence, to silence my testimony against him, renew his murderous effort in another direction. With an exhausted hand I passed a towel over my body and then clothed myself. Meanwhile, not a word was uttered. The man eyed me with ferocity, and his under-lip moved as though he were rehearsing some thoughts to himself in an impish jargon. We still continued to be the only boat upon the water. The great steamer had long since passed out of sight, and upon the horizon hung the few sails, scarcely impelled by the

languid breath of the air that was slowly weakening as the sun gained in power.

At last I said to the man, "Where are you going?"

"That's my business," he answered.

"Where are you taking me to?" I exclaimed.

He fastened his staring, gleaming eyes upon me and answered, "I'm going to put ye ashore."

"But you are not rowing the boat in the direction of the town."

"I know I'm not."

"I want you to set me ashore at the place where we started from."

"Ye *may* want," he replied, pausing upon his oars to advance his head towards me as he spoke, as though, in another moment, he would leap upon me.

By this time I had rallied my wits somewhat. The feeling of profound exhaustion was also passing. I was dressed, and the mere being

dressed was in its way a help towards the composure of the mind. I was man to man with the ruffian, but not his match—no, I had but to run my eye over his figure to understand *that*. I sat contemplating his villainous face and thinking. There was a boat-stretcher at my feet; but the man's fierce, keen eye was upon me; before I could grasp and employ the stretcher, the fellow would have guessed my intentions, and I must therefore either sit still and wait until I could understand what he meant to do, or fling myself upon him and take the chance of being hurled overboard. No purpose could be served by my capsizing the boat. I was now clothed, and my movements in the water would, therefore, be seriously hampered; and then, again, if I engaged in a struggle, with the intention of capsizing the boat, and succeeded in doing so, it might be his fortune to regain her and to keep me off from her, and, appalled and

exhausted as I was, I should not long be able to remain afloat.

He continued to row along a course that was still parallel with the coast. He rowed with a sort of sulky energy, and often directed a furious look at me, whilst his leather nether lip worked as though he were reciting some charm to himself. Presently I said to him, "Where are you taking me to? Why will you not put me ashore where we started from? You have tried to drown me, and your object can be nothing but plunder, for I have not offended you, I have done you no wrong, and, therefore, your only reason for attempting to drown me must be the jewellery upon me, and such money as you may hope I have in my pocket. Now, I will give you all that I possess—my watch and chain, this ring, and the two or three pounds which I have in my pocket—if you will set me ashore where I came from."

He stared fiercely at me, but made no response.

“Do you fear I will charge you with the crime you have attempted?” said I. “If you will set me ashore in safety I swear not to say a word upon what has happened.”

“I’m going to set ye ashore,” he exclaimed.

“But where?”

He flung his villainous head backwards towards the sea over the bows of his boat and said, “You’ll be finding out afore long.”

“Ah,” thought I, “if I had but a revolver in my pocket, if I had but a knife, if I had but any sort of weapon that I could furtively draw forth and instantly employ!”

The line of coast ran away down on the left-hand side. The nearest town in the direction the boatman was taking would be some miles distant from the place in which I was staying. The cliffs gradually rose to an altitude of hard upon a hundred feet, with many indents and little coves; but the face of them, as we advanced, grew more and yet more precipitous,

and in places the rocks stood abrupt and clean as the side of a wall. When the harbour we had quitted was out of sight, and the final group of houses on our side was hidden by the bend of the cliffs, the boatman took a swift look over his shoulder, then slightly changed the course of his boat, making her head in for the coast to a sort of bight of it, as it seemed, formed by an angular projection of the huge, iron-faced sea-terrace, so that it looked as if the land ended where that point of coast stood, for the horizon went to it, and we were not far enough out to see the sweep of land beyond.

That the boatman designed some diabolical act I did not doubt, but I could not imagine what form it was to take. He meant to set me ashore, he said. Did he intend to land and then murder me; to land me in some lonely bight or cave, and there fall upon me, and slay me? No, I did not believe that. If he in-

tended to make away with me for the sake of my money and jewellery, it would be his business to provide that I should appear to have been drowned by accident. Otherwise, how would he account for my disappearance? Or, if my body should be discovered, and marks of a devilish outrage were visible upon it, what answer would he be able to make to the charge of having murdered me?

But what then did he mean to do? To set me ashore? In that case I should be able to walk home and report what had happened. Did *he* mean to return to the town that he belonged to? That could not signify, for let him make for any port that he chose his capture was ultimately certain.

He swept the boat in rapidly to the coast, heading her for a curvature in the land that might have passed for a miniature bay. The sea remained a blank, save for those dim and distant sails upon the horizon. The water

washed to the foot of the coast; but in the little bay, for which the villain was aiming, I could perceive, as the boat rose on the slight swell that was now running, the gleam of sand. Nothing stirred on the heights; we were now within a quarter of a mile, but not a moving object was visible. He continued to row until the boat was in the embrace of the bay. The dark cliffs soared like a colossal rampart to high overhead, and at either extremity of the curve of the bay, at the point of either horn of it, there was a little play of surf. The man flung in his oars and stood up.

“Give me that watch and chain of yours!” he shouted.

I rose to my feet.

“Give me that watch and chain,” he roared again, and thrusting his great dark hand into his breeches pocket he whipped out a big clasp knife, which he opened. “No trouble,” he exclaimed, “or I’ll cut your throat.”

I placed the watch and chain down upon a thwart, and he pocketed them.

“Now pull out all the money you have.”

This I did, and he took the coins and put them in his pocket.

“Pull off that ring.”

This I also did. He eyed me all over, still grasping the knife. Then looking towards the beach, he said, “That’s where I’m going to land ye. You’re a good swimmer. Jump overboard.”

“If you land me there,” said I, “I shall be drowned. The water is rising, and those rocks are not to be climbed.”

“Jump overboard!” said he, with a menacing flourish of his knife.

“It is a bit of a swim as yet,” said I. “I am sick and without strength. For God’s sake put me a little closer to the beach that I may have a chance!”

He hesitated a moment, then stooped to pick



"IN THAT INSTANT I BOUNDED UPON HIM."

up an oar. In that instant I bounded upon him. Impelled by the incommunicable agony of mind I was in, by what I may truly call the terrific impulse of the despair that was upon me, I leapt the thwart with the velocity of a wolf at full cry, and ere he could lift his eyes I had put my shoulder to his side, and hove him into the water. Shipping an oar, I pulled the boat's head round, shipped the other oar betwixt the thole-pins, and pulled out of the bay with all my might.

Before the point of cliffs had shut out the bay, I caught sight of his head. The fellow was swimming, and swimming strongly, towards the curve of the sand at the foot of the cliff. I now understood the sort of fate he had intended for me. Having gained the sand, I should have been imprisoned by the water; but the tide was making fast, and, when the flood was at its full, the sea-line stood some feet above the level of the sand. There was not

an accessible piece of jutting rock—nothing for the hand to grasp, nor for the foot to support itself by, upon the face of the perpendicular steep. Therefore I must inevitably have been drowned. And what story would the ruffian have invented to account for my disappearance? I conceived this: that he would have leisurely rowed back to the harbour, moored his boat, and lounged upon the pier, as his custom was, without uttering a syllable about me, unless, indeed, he had been observed to row me out in his boat in the morning, and should be asked what had become of me. Supposing this question asked, he would answer that at my request he had set me ashore some two or three miles down the coast, as I desired to walk home by way of the cliffs. Who could have disproved this? It must have been readily credited. It was a thing that was again and again happening. And now imagine my body found upon the sands of the little bay where he had com-

pelled me to swim ashore ! There would have been an inquest ; it would be ascertained that I was the gentleman whom the gipsy boatman had set ashore. What more probable, then, than that I should have changed my mind, have attempted to make my way home in my ignorance of the neighbourhood, by way of the beach, instead of by way of the cliffs, and so have perished ?

These thoughts occupied my mind as I rowed the wherry in the direction of the harbour. I pulled at the oars with fury ; I was sensible of a horrid distraction of fear, as though it were in the power of the ruffian to pursue me, to arrest the boat, to enter her and cut my throat with the knife he had flourished. I entered the harbour, sculled to a landing stage, secured the painter of the boat to it, and stepped ashore. There were many people about ; the air resounded with the cries of boatmen inviting the passers-by to go out for a row or a sail.

None of these men took any notice of me. Probably none of them knew that I had started in company with the gipsy boatman, and they would probably imagine that I had returned from a solitary pull out to sea. I walked a little way, and presently observed a harbour policeman. I approached him, and said—

“I want to inform against a ruffian who has just attempted my life.”

He looked me hard in the face, and was clearly impressed by my agitation and appearance.

“What’s wrong?” said he.

“A boatman whom I went out with this morning has attempted to drown me,” said I.

“Step this way, sir,” said the man; and with that he conducted me to a brick-built house adjoining a row of warehouses, and in the window of this brick-built house was a large wire blind, on which was wrought in golden letters the words, “Harbour Police

Office." The policeman lifted the latch of the door and entered, and I followed him. An immense man, with large, red whiskers, wearing a sort of naval cap with letters interwreathed over the peak of it, and a frock-coat, the breast of which was braided, sat upon a tall, three-legged stool reading a newspaper. He looked at me over his spectacles as I entered.

"Here's a gent says that one of the boatmen's been a-trying to drown him," said the policeman; and, addressing me, he added, "This is the superintendent."

The superintendent put down his paper and took off his glasses, and asked me to tell him my business. I forthwith related my experiences to him. He listened attentively, occasionally glancing at the constable, who stood by listening with his mouth slightly open.

"Describe the man, sir," said the superintendent.

I did so.

"It's Gipsy Bill," said the constable.

"Yes, it's Gipsy Bill," said the superintendent—"the same man as took out the party that was drowned last month."

"And the same man," said the constable,



"HE LISTENED ATTENTIVELY, OCCASIONALLY GLANCING AT THE CONSTABLE, WHO STOOD BY LISTENING WITH HIS MOUTH SLIGHTLY OPEN."

"as took out the party that was drowned a year ago come next month."

The superintendent thumped his leg. "I've been suspicious of that chap all through," said

he. "Freeman, call Jones and Woodward, and take the boat and get the man. The flood'll not be at its height yet, and the man himself'll be as prettily nailed as though we had him in the lock-up."

I heard him pronounce these words, then a blood-red blaze of fire seemed to rush from my brain out through my eyes. I fell, and remember no more.

When I recovered my consciousness I was in bed in my own lodgings. All necessary information about me had been found in my pocket, in the shape of letters and cards. My sister had been telegraphed for, and she was at my bedside when I awoke, after three days of utter insensibility. When I was strong enough to listen and converse, I was told that the police-boat had pulled down to the little bay, found the man, and brought him to the town, where he was lying, locked up, charged with the attempt to murder me. Confirmatory proofs

of his guilt, outside the story I had related to the superintendent, were found upon his person, for the demon, probably forgetting in his time of peril that he had pocketed my watch and chain, my ring, and my money, had omitted to conceal them or fling them away when the police-boat showed herself round the corner.

But this was not all ; two visitors had lost their lives within a year. The body of one only was recovered, and this was the poor fellow whose remains I had stumbled upon during my lonely moonlight walk along the sands. It was believed that both these men had perished whilst bathing from a boat, and the coroner, during the inquest held upon the body that had been recovered, had commented somewhat significantly upon the circumstance of both these disasters having occurred from the same boat, in charge of the same man.

And now, whilst I had lain unconscious, the police had searched the little house, or room,

occupied by the boatman named Gipsy Bill, and there they had discovered a gold pencil-case and a pair of gold pince-nez glasses and a watch-chain, of which articles the two former were claimed as belonging to the man who had been drowned in the previous year, whilst the watch-chain was sworn to by the widow of the gentleman whose body I had discovered, the poor lady happening to be in the town whilst I lay unconscious. The upshot of it was that Gipsy Bill was sentenced to penal servitude for life. That he was guilty of two murders was certain, and therefore he ought to have been hanged. Nevertheless, the circumstantial evidence did not seem sufficiently strong to admit of the death penalty, for it could not certainly be proved that the fiend, when his victims had plunged overboard, had quietly continued to row, leaving the unhappy men to sink with exhaustion in his wake. It could not certainly be proved that the poor fellows had *not* been

seized with cramp and suddenly sunk ; but, all the same, no one who heard the story ever doubted that this demon of a gipsy boatman had left them to perish, or, as he had attempted in my case, had hastened their end by a blow with his oar.

TO PLEASE HIS WIFE.

BY THOMAS HARDY.



I.



THOMAS HARDY.

THE interior of St. James's Church, in Havenpool Town, was slowly darkening under the close clouds of a winter afternoon. It was Sunday : service had just ended, the face of the parson in the pulpit was buried in his hands, and the congregation, with a cheerful sigh of release, were rising from their knees to depart.

For the moment the stillness was so complete

that the surging of the sea could be heard outside the harbour-bar. Then it was broken by the footsteps of the clerk going towards the west door to open it in the usual manner for the exit of the assembly. Before, however, he had reached the doorway, the latch was lifted from without, and the dark figure of a man in a sailor's garb appeared against the light.

The clerk stepped aside, the sailor closed the door gently behind him, and advanced up the nave till he stood at the chancel step. The parson looked up from the private little prayer which, after so many for the parish, he quite fairly took for himself, rose to his feet, and stared at the intruder.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the sailor, addressing the minister in a voice distinctly audible to all the congregation. "I have come here to offer thanks for my narrow escape from shipwreck. I am given to

understand that it is a proper thing to do, if you have no objection?"

The parson, after a moment's pause, said hesitatingly, "I have no objection; certainly. It is usual to mention any such wish before service, so that the proper words may be used in the General Thanksgiving. But, if you wish, we can read from the form for use after a storm at sea."

"Ay, sure; I ain't particular," said the sailor.

The clerk thereupon directed the sailor to the page in the Prayer-book where the collect of thanksgiving would be found, and the rector began reading it, the sailor kneeling where he stood, and repeating it after him word by word in a distinct voice. The people, who had remained agape and motionless at the proceeding, mechanically knelt down likewise; but they continued to regard the isolated form of the sailor who, in the precise middle of the chancel step, remained fixed on his

knees, facing the east, his hat beside him, his hands joined, and he quite unconscious of his appearance in their regard.

When his thanksgiving had come to an end, he arose; the people arose also, and all went out of church together. As soon as the sailor emerged, so that the remaining daylight fell upon his face, old inhabitants began to recognize him as no other than Shadrach Jolliffe, a young man who had not been seen at Havenpool for several years. A son of the town, his parents had died when he was quite young, on which account he had early gone to sea, in the Newfoundland trade.

He talked with this and that townsman as he walked, informing them that, since leaving his native place years before, he had become captain and owner of a small coasting-ketch, which had providentially been saved from the gale as well as himself. Presently he drew

near to two girls who were going out of the churchyard in front of him; they had been sitting in the nave at his entry, and had watched his doings with deep interest, afterwards discussing him as they moved out of church together. One was a slight and gentle creature, the other a tall, large-framed, deliberative girl. Captain Jolliffe regarded the loose curls of their hair, their backs and shoulders, down to their heels, for some time.

"Who may those two maids be?" he whispered to his neighbour.

"The little one is Emily Hanning; the tall one Joanna Phippard."

"Ah! I recollect 'em now, to be sure."

He advanced to their elbow, and genially stole a gaze at them.

"Emily, you don't know me?" said the sailor, turning his beaming brown eyes on her.

"I think I do, Mr. Jolliffe," said Emily, shyly.

The other girl looked straight at him with her dark eyes.

"The face of Miss Joanna I don't call to



"HE ADVANCED TO THEIR ELBOW, GENIALLY STOLE A GAZE AT THEM,
AND SAID, 'EMILY, YOU DON'T KNOW ME?'"

mind so well," he continued. "But I know her beginnings and kindred."

They walked and talked together, Jolliffe narrating particulars of his late narrow escape, till they reached the corner of Sloop Lane, in which Emily Hanning dwelt, when, with a nod and smile, she left them. Soon the sailor parted also from Joanna, and, having no especial errand or appointment, turned back towards Emily's house. She lived with her father, who called himself an accountant, the daughter, however, keeping a little stationery shop as a supplemental provision for the gaps of his somewhat uncertain business. On entering Jolliffe found father and daughter about to begin tea.

"Oh, I didn't know it was teatime," he said.
"Ay, I'll have a cup with much pleasure."

He remained to tea and long afterwards, telling more tales of his seafaring life. Several neighbours called to listen, and were asked to come in. Somehow Emily Hanning lost her heart to the sailor that Sunday night,

and in the course of a week or two there was a tender understanding between them.

One moonlight evening in the next month Shadrach was ascending out of the town by the long straight road eastward, to an elevated suburb where the more fashionable houses stood—if anything near this ancient port could be called fashionable—when he saw a figure before him whom, from her manner of glancing back, he took to be Emily. But, on coming up, he found she was Joanna Phippard. He gave a gallant greeting, and walked beside her.

“Go along,” she said, “or Emily will be jealous!”

He seemed not to like the suggestion, and remained.

What was said and what was done on that walk never could be clearly recollected by Shadrach; but in some way or other Joanna contrived to wean him away from her gentler and younger rival. From that week onwards,

Jolliffe was seen more and more in the wake of Joanna Phippard and less in the company of Emily; and it was soon rumoured about the quay that old Jolliffe's son, who had come home from sea, was going to be married to the former young woman, to the great disappointment of the latter.

Just after this report had gone about, Joanna dressed herself for a walk one morning, and started for Emily's house in the little cross street. Intelligence of the deep sorrow of her friend on account of the loss of Shadrach had reached her ears also, and her conscience reproached her for winning him away.

Joanna was not altogether satisfied with the sailor. She liked his attentions, and she coveted the dignity of matrimony; but she had never been deeply in love with Jolliffe. For one thing, she was ambitious, and socially his position was hardly so good as her own, while there was always the chance of an

attractive woman mating considerably above her. It had long been in her mind that she would not strongly object to give him back again to Emily if her friend felt so very badly about him. To this end she had penned a letter of renunciation to Shadrach, which letter she carried in her hand, intending to post it if personal observation of Emily convinced her that her friend was suffering.

Joanna entered Sloop Lane and stepped down into the stationery shop, which was below the pavement level. Emily's father was never at home at this hour of the day, and it seemed as though Emily was not at home either, for the visitor could make nobody hear. Customers came so seldom hither that a five minutes' absence of the proprietor counted for little. Joanna waited in the little shop, where Emily had tastefully set out—as women can—articles in themselves of slight value, so as to obscure the meagreness of the stock-in-trade; till she

saw a figure pausing without the window apparently absorbed in the contemplation of the sixpenny books, packets of paper, and prints hung on a string. It was Captain Shadrach Jolliffe, peering in to ascertain if Emily was there alone. Moved by an impulse of reluctance to meet him in a spot which breathed of Emily, she slipped through the door that communicated with the parlour at the back. Joanna had frequently done so before, for in her friendship with Emily she had the freedom of the house without ceremony.

Jolliffe entered the shop. Through the thin blind which screened the glass partition she could see that he was disappointed at not finding Emily there. He was about to go out again, when her form darkened the doorway, hastening back from some errand. At sight of Jolliffe she started back as if she would have gone out again.

"Don't run away, Emily; don't!" said he.
"What can make ye afraid?"

"I'm not afraid, Captain Jolliffe. Only—only I saw you all of a sudden, and—it made me jump." Her voice showed that her heart had jumped even more than the rest of her.

"I just called as I was passing," he said.

"For some paper?" She hastened behind the counter.

"No, no, Emily. Why do ye get behind there? Why not stay by me? You seem to hate me."

"I don't hate you. How can I?"

"Then come out, so that we can talk like Christians."

Emily obeyed with a fitful laugh, till she stood again beside him in the open part of the shop.

"There's a dear," he said.

"You mustn't say that, Captain Jolliffe; because the words belong to somebody else."

“ Ah ! I know what you mean. But, Emily, upon my life I didn't know till this morning that you cared one bit about me, or I should not have done as I have done. I have the best of feelings for Joanna, but I know that from the beginning she hasn't cared for me more than in a friendly way ; and I see now the one I ought to have asked to be my wife. You know, Emily, when a man comes home from sea after a long voyage he's as blind as a bat—he can't see who's who in women. They are all alike to him, beautiful creatures, and he takes the first that comes easy, without thinking if she loves him, or if he might not soon love another better than her. From the first I inclined to you most, but you were so backward and shy that I thought you didn't want me to bother 'ee, and so I went to Joanna.”

“ Don't say any more, Mr. Jolliffe, don't ! ” said she, choking. “ You are going to marry

Joanna next month, and it is wrong to—to—— ”

“Oh, Emily, my darling!” he cried, and clasped her little figure in his arms before she was aware.

Joanna, behind the curtain, turned pale, tried to withdraw her eyes, but could not.

“It is only you I love as a man ought to love the woman he is going to marry; and I know this from what Joanna has said, that she will willingly let me off. She wants to marry higher, I know, and only said ‘Yes’ to me out of kindness. A fine, tall girl like her isn’t the sort for a plain sailor’s wife; you be the best suited for that.”

He kissed her and kissed her again, her flexible form quivering in the agitation of his embrace.

“I wonder—are you sure—Joanna is going to break off with you? Oh, are you sure? Because—— ”

"I know she would not wish to make us miserable. She will release me."

"Oh, I hope—I hope she will! Don't stay any longer, Captain Jolliffe!"

He lingered, however, till a customer came for a penny stick of sealing-wax, and then he withdrew.

Green envy had overspread Joanna at the scene. She looked about for a way of escape. To get out without Emily's knowledge of her visit was indispensable. She crept from the parlour into the passage, and thence to the front door of the house, where she let herself noiselessly into the street.

The sight of that caress had reversed all her resolutions. She could not let Shadrach go. Reaching home, she burnt the letter, and told her mother that if Captain Jolliffe called she was too unwell to see him.

Shadrach, however, did not call. He sent her a note expressing in simple language the

state of his feelings, and asking to be allowed to take advantage of the hints she had given him that her affection, too, was little more than friendly, by cancelling the engagement.

Looking out upon the harbour and the island beyond he waited and waited in his lodgings for an answer that did not come. The suspense grew to be so intolerable that after dark he went up the High Street. He could not resist calling at Joanna's to learn his fate.

Her mother said her daughter was too unwell to see him, and to his questioning admitted that it was in consequence of a letter received from himself, which had distressed her deeply.

"You know what it was about, perhaps, Mrs. Phippard?" he said.

Mrs. Phippard owned that she did, adding that it put them in a very painful position. Thereupon Shadrach, fearing that he had been guilty of an enormity, explained that if his letter had pained Joanna it must be owing to

a misunderstanding, since he had thought it would be a relief to her. If otherwise, he would hold himself bound by his word, and she was to think of the letter as never having been written.

Next morning he received an oral message from the young woman, asking him to fetch her home from a meeting that evening. This he did, and while walking from the Town Hall to her door, with her hand in his arm, she said—

“It is all the same as before between us, isn’t it, Shadrach? Your letter was sent in mistake?”

“It is all the same as before,” he answered, “if you say it must be.”

“I wish it to be,” she murmured, with hard lineaments, as she thought of Emily.

Shadrach was a religious and scrupulous man, who respected his word as his life. Shortly afterwards the wedding took place, Jolliffe

having conveyed to Emily as gently as possible the error he had fallen into when estimating Joanna's mood as one of indifference.

II.

A MONTH after the marriage Joanna's mother died, and the couple were obliged to turn their attention to very practical matters. Now that she was left without a parent, Joanna could not bear the notion of her husband going to sea again, but the question was, What could he do at home? They finally decided to take on a grocer's shop in High Street, the goodwill and stock of which were waiting to be disposed of at that time. Shadrach knew nothing of shopkeeping, and Joanna very little, but they hoped to learn.

To the management of this grocery business they now devoted all their energies, and continued to conduct it for many succeeding years,

without great success. Two sons were born to them, whom their mother loved to idolatry, although she had never passionately loved her husband; and she lavished upon them all her forethought and care. But the shop did not thrive, and the large dreams she had entertained of her sons' education and career became attenuated in the face of realities. Their schooling was of the plainest, but, being by the sea, they grew alert in all such nautical arts and enterprises as were attractive to their age.

The great interest of the Jolliffes' married life, outside their own immediate household, had lain in the marriage of Emily. By one of those odd chances which lead those that lurk in unexpected corners to be discovered while the obvious are passed by, the gentle girl had been seen and loved by a thriving merchant of the town, a widower, some years older than herself, though still in the prime of life. At

first Emily had declared that she never, never could marry any one; but Mr. Lester had quietly persevered, and had at last won her reluctant assent. Two children also were the fruits of this union, and, as they grew and prospered, Emily declared that she had never supposed she could live to be so happy.

The worthy merchant's home, one of those large, substantial brick mansions frequently jammed up in old-fashioned towns, faced directly on the High Street, nearly opposite to the grocery shop of the Jolliffes, and it now became the pain of Joanna to behold the woman, whose place she had usurped out of pure covetousness, looking down from her position of comparative wealth upon the humble shop-window with its dusty sugar-loaves, heaps of raisins, and canisters of tea, over which it was her own lot to preside. The business having so dwindled, Joanna was obliged to serve in the shop herself, and it galled and mortified her that Emily

Lester, sitting in her large drawing-room over the way, could witness her own dancings up and down behind the counter at the beck and call of wretched twopenny customers, whose patronage she was driven to welcome gladly: persons to whom she was compelled to be civil in the street, while Emily was bounding along with her children and her governess, and conversing with the genteelest people of the town and neighbourhood. This was what she had gained by not letting Shadrach Jolliffe, whom she had so faintly loved, carry his affection elsewhere.

Shadrach was a good and honest man, and he had been faithful to her in heart and in deed. Time had clipped the wings of his love for Emily in his devotion to the mother of his boys: he had quite lived down that impulsive earlier fancy, and Emily had become in his regard nothing more than a friend. It was the same with Emily's feelings for him.

Possibly, had she found the least cause for jealousy, Joanna would almost have been better satisfied. It was in the absolute acquiescence of Emily and Shadrach in the results she herself had contrived that her discontent found nourishment.

Shadrach was not endowed with the narrow shrewdness necessary for developing a retail business in the face of many competitors. Did a customer inquire if the grocer could really recommend the wondrous substitute for eggs which a persevering bagman had forced into his stock, he would answer that "when you did not put eggs into a pudding it was difficult to taste them there;" and when he was asked if his "real Mocha coffee" was real Mocha, he would say grimly, "as understood in small shops."

One summer day, when the big brick house opposite was reflecting the oppressive sun's heat into the shop, and nobody was present

but husband and wife, Joanna looked across at Emily's door, where a carriage had drawn up. Traces of patronage had been visible in Emily's manner of late.

"Shadrach, the truth is, you are not a business man," his wife sadly murmured. "You were not brought up to shopkeeping, and it is impossible for a man to make a fortune at an occupation he has jumped into, as you did into this."

Jolliffe agreed with her, in this as in everything else. "Not that I care a rope's end about making a fortune," he said cheerfully. "I am happy enough, and we can rub on somehow."

She looked again at the great house through the screen of bottled pickles.

"Rub on—yes," she said bitterly. "But see how well off Emmy Lester is, who used to be so poor! Her boys will go to college, no doubt; and think of yours—obliged to go to the National School!"

Shadrach's thoughts had flown to Emily.

"Nobody," he said, good-humouredly, "ever did Emily a better turn than you did, Joanna, when you warned her off me and put an end to that little simpering nonsense between us, so as to leave it in her power to say: 'Aye' to Lester when he came along."

This almost maddened her.

"Don't speak of bygones!" she implored, in stern sadness. "But think, for the boys' and my sake, if not for your own, what are we to do to get richer?"

"Well," he said, becoming serious, "to tell the truth, I have always felt myself unfit for this business, though I've never liked to say so. I seem to want more room for sprawling; a more open space to strike out in than here among friends and neighbours. I could get rich as well as any man, if I tried my own way."

"I wish you would! What is your way?"

“To go to sea again.”

She had been the very one to keep him at home, hating the semi-widowed existence of sailors' wives. But her ambition checked her instincts now, and she said—

“Do you think success really lies that way?”

“I am sure it lies in no other.”

“Do you want to go, Shadrach?”

“Not for the pleasure of it, I can tell 'ee. There's no such pleasure at sea, Joanna, as I can find in my back parlour here. To speak honest, I have no love for the brine. I never had much. But if it comes to a question of a fortune for you and the lads, it is another thing. That's the only way to it for one born and bred a seafarer as I.”

“Would it take long to earn?”

“Well, that depends; perhaps not.”

The next morning Shadrach pulled from a chest of drawers the nautical jacket he had

worn during the first months of his return, brushed out the moths, donned it, and walked down to the quay. The port still did a fair business in the Newfoundland trade, though not so much as formerly.

It was not long after this that he invested all he possessed in purchasing a part-ownership in a brig, of which he was appointed captain. A few months were passed in coast-trading, during which interval Shadrach wore off the land-rust that had accumulated upon him in his grocery phase; and in the spring the brig sailed for Newfoundland.

Joanna lived on at home with her sons, who were now growing up into strong lads, and occupying themselves in various ways about the harbour and quay.

“Never mind, let them work a little,” their fond mother said to herself. “Our necessities compel it now, but when Shadrach comes home they will be only seventeen and eighteen, and

they shall be removed from the port, and their education thoroughly taken in hand by a tutor; and with the money they'll have they will perhaps be as near to gentlemen as Emmy Lester's precious two, with their algebra and their Latin."

The date for Shadrach's return drew near and arrived, and he did not appear. Joanna was assured that there was no cause for anxiety, sailing-ships being so uncertain in their coming; which assurance proved to be well-grounded, for late one wet evening, about a month after the calculated time, the ship was announced as at hand, and presently the slip-slop step of Shadrach as the sailor sounded in the passage, and he entered. The boys had gone out and had missed him, and Joanna was sitting alone.

As soon as the first emotion of reunion between the couple had passed, Jolliffe explained the delay as owing to a small speculative contract, which had produced good results.

"I was determined not to disappoint 'ee," he said; "and I think you'll own that I haven't."

With this he pulled out an enormous canvas bag, full and rotund as the money-bag of the giant whom Jack slew, untied it, and shook the contents out into her lap as she sat in her low chair by the fire. A mass of guineas (there were guineas on the earth in those days) fell into her lap with a sudden thud, weighing down her gown to the floor.

"There!" said Shadrach, complacently. "I told 'ee, dear, I'd do it; and have I done it or no?"

Somehow her face, after the first excitement of possession, did not retain its glory.

"It is a lot of gold, indeed," she said. "And—is this *all*?"

"All? Why, dear Joanna, do you know you can count to three hundred in that heap? It is a fortune!"

"Yes—yes. A fortune—judged by sea; but judged by land——"

However, she banished considerations of the money for the nonce. Soon the boys came in, and next Sunday Shadrach returned thanks—this time by the more ordinary channel of the italics in the General Thanksgiving. But a few days after, when the question of investing the money arose, he remarked that she did not seem so satisfied as he had hoped.

"Well, you see, Shadrach," she answered, "*we* count by hundreds; *they* count by thousands" (nodding towards the other side of the street). "They have set up a carriage and pair since you left."

"Oh! have they?"

"My dear Shadrach, you don't know how the world moves. However, we'll do the best we can with it. But they are rich, and we are poor still."

The greater part of a year was desultorily

spent. She moved sadly about the house and shop, and the boys were still occupying themselves in and around the harbour.

"Joanna," he said, one day, "I see by your movements that it is not enough."

"It is not enough," said she. "My boys will have to live by steering the ships that the Lesters own, and I was once above her!"

Jolliffe was not an argumentative man, and he only murmured that he thought he would take another voyage. He meditated for several days, and coming home from the quay one afternoon, said suddenly—

"I could do it for 'ee, dear, in one more trip, for certain, if—if——"

"Do what, Shadrach?"

"Enable 'ee to count by thousands instead of hundreds."

"If what?"

"If I might take the boys."

She turned pale.

"Don't say that, Shadrach," she answered hastily.

"Why?"

"I don't like to hear it. There's danger at sea. I want them to be something genteel, and no danger to them. I couldn't let them risk their lives at sea. Oh, I couldn't ever, ever!"

"Very well, dear, it shan't be done."

Next day, after a silence, she asked a question—

"If they were to go with you it would make a great deal of difference, I suppose, to the profit?"

"'Twould treble what I should get from the venture single-handed. Under my eye they would be as good as two more of myself."

Later on she said, "Tell me more about this?"

Well, the boys are almost as clever as master-mariners in handling a craft, upon my

life. There isn't a more cranky place in the South Seas than about the sandbanks of this harbour, and they've practised here from their infancy. And they are so steady. I couldn't get their steadiness and their trustworthiness in half a dozen men twice their age."

"And is it *very* dangerous at sea; now, too, there are rumours of war?" she asked uneasily.

"Oh, well, there be risks. Still——"

The idea grew and magnified, and the mother's heart was crushed and stifled by it. Emmy was growing *too* patronizing; it could not be borne. Shadrach's wife could not help nagging him about their comparative poverty. The young men, amiable as their father, when spoken to on the subject of a voyage of enterprise, were quite willing to embark; and though they, like their father, had no great love for the sea, they became quite enthusiastic when the proposal was detailed.

Everything now hung upon their mother's assent. She withheld it long, but at last gave the word : the young men might accompany their father. Shadrach was unusually cheerful about it : Heaven had preserved him hitherto, and he had uttered his thanks. God would not forsake those who were faithful to Him.

All that the Jolliffes possessed in the world was put into the enterprise. The grocery stock was pared down to the least that possibly could afford a bare sustenance to Joanna during the absence, which was to last through the usual Newf'nland spell." How she would endure the weary time she hardly knew, for the boys had been with her formerly ; but she nerved herself for the trial.

The ship was laden with boots and shoes, ready-made clothing, fishing-tackle, butter, cheese, cordage, sailcloth, and many other commodities ; and was to bring back oil, furs, skins, fish, cranberries, and what else came to

hand. But much trading to other ports was to be undertaken between the voyages out and homeward, and thereby much money made.

III.

THE brig sailed on a Monday morning in spring; but Joanna did not witness its departure. She could not bear the sight that she had been the means of bringing about. Knowing this, her husband told her overnight that they were to sail some time before noon next day; hence when, awakening at five the next morning, she heard them bustling about downstairs, she did not hasten to descend, but lay trying to nerve herself for the parting, imagining they would leave about nine, as her husband had done on his previous voyage. When she did descend she beheld words chalked upon the sloping face of the bureau; but no

husband or sons. In the hastily scrawled lines Shadrach said they had gone off thus not to pain her by a leave-taking; and the sons had chalked under, "Good-bye, mother."

She rushed to the quay, and looked down the harbour towards the blue rim of the sea, but she could only see the masts and bulging sails of the *Joanna*; no human figures. "'Tis I have sent them!" she said wildly, and burst into tears. In the house the chalked Good-byes nearly broke her heart. But when she had re-entered the front room, and looked across at Emily's, a gleam of triumph lit her thin face at her anticipated release from the thralldom of subservience.

To do Emily Lester justice, her assumption of superiority was mainly a figment of Joanna's brain. That the circumstances of the merchant's wife were more luxurious than Joanna's, the former could not conceal; though whenever the two met, which was not very often

now, Emily endeavoured to subdue the difference by every means in her power.

The first summer lapsed away ; and Joanna meagrely maintained herself by the shop, which now consisted of little more than a window and a counter. Emily was, in truth, her only large customer ; and Mrs. Lester's kindly readiness to buy anything and everything without questioning the quality had a sting of bitterness in it, for it was the uncritical attitude of a patron, and almost of a donor. The long dreary winter moved on ; the face of the bureau had been turned to the wall to protect the chalked words of farewell, for she could never bring herself to rub them out ; and she often glanced at them with wet eyes. Emily's handsome boys came home for the Christmas holidays ; and still Joanna subsisted as it were with held breath, like a person submerged. Only one summer more, and the spell would end. Towards the end of the time Emily called on

her quondam friend. She had heard that Joanna began to feel anxious ; she had received no letter from husband or sons for some months. Emily's silks rustled arrogantly when, in response to Joanna's almost dumb invitation, she squeezed through the opening of the counter and into the parlour behind the shop.

"You are all success, and I am all the other way!" said Joanna.

"But why do you think so?" said Emily.
"They are to bring back a fortune, I hear."

"Ah, will they come? The doubt is more than a woman can bear. All three in one ship—think of that! And I have not heard of them for months!"

"But the time is not up. You should not meet misfortune half-way."

"Nothing will repay me for the grief of their absence!"

"Then why did you let them go? You were doing fairly well."

"I *made* them go!" she said, turning vehemently upon Emily. "And I'll tell you why! I could not bear that we should be only muddling on, and you so rich and thriving. Now I have told you, and you may hate me if you will!"

"I shall never hate you, Joanna."

And she proved the truth of her words afterwards. The end of the autumn came, and the brig should have been in port; but nothing like the *Joanna* appeared in the channel between the sands. It was now really time to be uneasy. Joanna Jolliffe sat by the fire, and every gust of wind caused her a cold thrill. She had always feared and detested the sea; to her it was a treacherous, restless, slimy creature, glorying in the griefs of women. "Still," she said, "they *must* come!"

She recalled to her mind that Shadrach had said before starting that if they returned safe and sound, with success crowning their enter-

prise, he would go as he had gone after his shipwreck, and kneel with his sons in the church, and offer sincere thanks for their deliverance. She went to church regularly morning and afternoon, and sat in the most forward pew, nearest the chancel-step. Her eyes were mostly fixed on that step, where Shadrach had knelt in the bloom of his young manhood: she knew to an inch the spot which his knees had pressed twenty winters before; his outline as he had knelt, his hat on the step beside him. God was good. Surely her husband must kneel there again: a son on each side as he had said; George just here, Jim just there. By long watching the spot as she worshipped, it became as if she saw the three returned ones there kneeling; the two slim outlines of her boys, the more bulky form between them; their hands clasped, their heads shaped against the eastern wall. The fancy grew almost to an hallucination; she could

never turn her worn eyes to the step without seeing them there.

Nevertheless they did not come. Heaven was merciful, but it was not yet pleased to relieve her soul. This was her purgation for the sin of making them the slaves of her ambition. But it became more than purgation soon, and her mood approached despair. Months had passed since the brig had been due, but it had not returned.

Joanna was always hearing or seeing evidences of their arrival. When on the hill behind the port, whence a view of the open Channel could be obtained, she felt sure that a little speck on the horizon, breaking the eternally level waste of waters southward, was the truck of the *Joanna's* mainmast. Or when indoors, a shout or excitement of any kind at the corner of the Town Cellar, where the High Street joined the Quay, caused her to spring to her feet and cry : “ ’Tis they ! ”



**"WHEN ON THE HILL BEHIND THE PORT, WHENCE A VIEW OF THE CHANNEL
COULD BE OBTAINED, SHE FELT SURE THAT A LITTLE SPECK ON THE
HORIZON WAS THE TRUCK OF THE JOANNA'S MAINMAST."**

But it was not. The visionary forms knelt every Sunday afternoon on the chancel step, but not the real. Her shop had, as it were, eaten itself hollow. In the apathy which had resulted from her loneliness and grief she had ceased to take in the smallest supplies, and thus had sent away her last customer.

In this strait Emily Lester tried by every means in her power to aid the afflicted woman ; but she met with constant repulses.

“I don’t like you ! I can’t bear to see you !” Joanna would whisper hoarsely when Emily came to her and made advances.

“But I want to help and soothe you, Joanna,” Emily would say.

“You are a lady, with a rich husband and fine sons. What can you want with a bereaved crone like me ?”

“Joanna, I want this : I want you to come and live in my house, and not stay alone in this dismal place any longer.”

“And suppose they come and don’t find me at home? You wish to separate me and mine! No, I’ll stay here. I don’t like you, and I can’t thank you, whatever kindness you do me.”

However, as time went on, Joanna could not afford to pay the rent of the shop and house without an income. She was assured that all hope of the return of Shadrach and his sons was vain, and she reluctantly consented to accept the asylum of the Lesters’ house. Here she was allotted a room of her own on the second floor, and went and came as she chose, without contact with the family. Her hair greyed and whitened, deep lines channelled her forehead, and her form grew gaunt and stooping. But she still expected the lost ones, and when she met Emily on the staircase she would say morosely, “I know why you’ve got me here! They’ll come, and be disappointed at not finding me at home, and perhaps go away

again; and then you'll be revenged for my taking Shadrach away from 'ee."

Emily Lester bore these reproaches from the grief-stricken soul. She was sure—all the people of Havenpool were sure—that Shadrach and his sons could not return. For years the vessel had been given up as lost. Nevertheless, when awakened at night by any noise, Joanna would rise from bed and glance at the shop opposite by the light from the flickering lamp, to make sure it was not they.

It was a damp and dark December night, six years after the departure of the brig *Joanna*. The wind was from the sea, and brought up a fishy mist which mopped the face like moist flannel. Joanna had prayed her usual prayer for the absent ones with more fervour and confidence than she had felt for months, and had fallen asleep about eleven. It must have been between one and two when she suddenly started up. She had certainly heard steps in the

street, and the voices of Shadrach and her sons calling at the door of the grocery shop. She sprang out of bed, and, hardly knowing what clothing she dragged on herself, hastened down Emily's large and carpeted staircase, put the candle on the hall-table, unfastened the bolts and chain, and stepped into the street. The mist, blowing up the street from the Quay, hindered her seeing the shop, although it was so near ; but she had crossed to it in a moment. How was it? Nobody stood there. The wretched woman walked wildly up and down with her bare feet—there was not a soul. She returned and knocked with all her might at the door which had once been her own—they might have been admitted for the night, unwilling to disturb her till the morning. It was not till several minutes had elapsed that the young man who now kept the shop looked out of an upper window, and saw the skeleton of something human standing below half dressed.

“Has anybody arrived?” asked the form.

“Oh, Mrs. Jolliffe, I didn’t know it was you,” said the young man, kindly, for he was aware how her baseless expectations moved her.

“No; nobody has come.”

THE GHOST OF THE PAST.

BY MRS. E. LYNN LINTON.



MRS. E. LYNN LINTON.

WE all have our times of supremest bliss—our days of intensest brilliancy. They may be as short-lived as a morning glory, or they may last as long as a summer garden, but there they are—times when we are absolutely content—when we see no clouds on the horizon and forget the storms that lie behind us—days when the flaming sword is sheathed and the Gates of Eden stand open, and we walk through the meadows of asphodel and ama-

ranth, believing in their everlasting beauty, peace, and fragrance. The glory of fulfilled ambition makes this time for some, and Honour clothes the sky with stars that dazzle as they shine; but Love, dear Love, is the sun itself and gives us the sweetest and most exquisite of all our joys. Love, dear Love! what can equal it for the soul's delight! It combines in itself all the lustrous hues of life; it is the chord wherein sound all its loveliest harmonies. It transforms poverty to wealth; and it builds that divine City of Enchantment where the queen is always fair and the prince is always young. It is the gladdest minister, if also the cruellest master of man. When we love and are beloved, we sit with the gods on the hill of Heaven; when we love and are not beloved, through change, satiety, or death, we are cast down into hell with Lucifer and the fallen angels. Meantime, while we are young—while the sun shines and the heart beats high and

kisses are still fresh to the lips—while the roses are in bud and before the silver streaks the gold—the gods are our friends and earth is our Paradise. We love and are beloved; and there is no death nor sorrow in the world!

Had his sensations been put into form Hubert Gainsborough would have seen something like this written on the sands over which the tide was swiftly flowing—washing away those intertwined initials which he had just drawn on the level beach. He knew that this was their golden hour, and that he and Naomi would never be more blessed than they were now, no, not even when the final sacrament had separated them from the world and given them to each other for that wonderful moon which love makes of honey, and all that is not love turns to gall. Everything was in their favour, and their coming marriage was one in which the most critical, the most censorious,

could find no flaw. It was as smooth as satin and clear as crystal. Fortune, station, health, ages—not a crooked straw was on their path—not a leaf of nightshade presaged the coming of the deadly witch of misfortune. Naomi had had no other fancy by which to compare her lover to his disadvantage, and Hubert had buried out of sight all his. He had sown his wild oats and the sack was now empty. And yet—the harvest? Bitter enough at the time, was it really all stacked and garnered? Might not some aftermath crop up again when least expected? The passover is vitiated for the pious Jew if but one measure of leaven remains. What of the passover of the Fates who pursue, of the Vengeance which strikes, if aught of that bitter harvest of youthful folly remains?

Why did the thought of her suddenly cross his mind at this moment? Why did Naomi's bended neck make him slightly shiver as if a cold wind had passed over him, gorgeous,

burning summer time as it was? As she stooped her head, looking into the little pool where the sea-flowers had spread out their coloured rays, the sunlight caught the fringe at the back of her neck, and the brown of her hair was brightened into gold.

A sudden longing to kiss those feathery little curls flushed him like a fever; and then a thought checked his impulse and made his blood run cold as if a wandering ghost had touched him as it passed. The last time he kissed a woman's neck, there at the back, he had been sitting, as now, on the sands of the seashore. But it had been in France—at that glaring, garish Trouville—not in a leafy little home-bay in Devonshire; and, instead of Naomi Ponsonby, pledged to be his wife before the year was out, his companion had been the beautiful American, Mariquita Delmare, with whom there had never been a question of marriage. For was not that burly, black-



"AS SHE STOOPED HER HEAD . . . THE SUNLIGHT CAUGHT THE FRINGE AT THE
BACK OF HER NECK."

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bearded, crop-haired man who, once a week, came down to see her, and of whom she was evidently so much afraid, Auguste Delmare and her husband? All the same, wife as she was—or seemed to be—Hubert had loved this woman with the intensity of a young man's first serious passion. And when his enlightenment came, nothing but the anger of contempt had saved him from the heartbreak of despair.

But why should he think of her now? As things had shaped themselves in his life it was a kind of sacrilege to remember her at all. To be actively reminded of her by Naomi was blasphemous.

Naomi saw the change in her lover's face—it was as if a cloud had come over the sun. Not being a woman of obtrusive sympathy nor of inquisitive affection, instead of speaking or asking why, she laid her hand on his with a caressing touch that told all she wished to say.

It was such a gentle, tender little touch!—so womanly in its sympathy, but yet so almost childish in its ignorance of the reason why! It was to Hubert what the harp of David was to Saul. The cloud passed—the wandering ghost vanished. Mariquita Delmare faded into the void of nothingness; and all that Hubert saw was Naomi Ponsonby sitting there in the sunlight beside him—the angel whom the gods had given to bless and beautify his life—the divine maiden so soon to become his dear wife!

He took her hand and kissed it. What a beautiful hand it was! Those long taper fingers and that generous palm expressed her character in its mixture of idealistic morality and human tenderness. By the one she held a lofty standard and would be an inflexible judge; by the other she opened her arms to the suffering, and banished from her heart no one whom that heart could succour.

“The loveliest hand in the whole world!”

said Hubert, tracing the veins and outlining the fingers after he had kissed it as a saint might kiss a relic; but also as a lover kisses the hand of the beloved.

“Said by the most unblushing flatterer in the whole world!” laughed Naomi.

“Love cannot flatter,” he answered, looking at her with eyes as full of admiration as those roses at her throat were full of colour and perfume.

“I think it does nothing else,” she returned, still laughing.

She was so happy that everything made her laugh. Like a child, the whole earth seemed to be one great throb of joy.

“Then all you say to me is flattery, hey?” said Hubert. “Ah, sweet, my sweet, you have put yourself into a cleft stick! How will you get out of it?”

“But I never do flatter you as you flatter me,” she said. “When did I tell you that this

thing about you was so beautiful, and that so charming? Never!"

"If you have not in so many words, you have twenty times by those great grey eyes of yours!" he answered with mock self-complacency. "I know you admire me immensely, and think me no end of a fine fellow; so we are quits after all—only I am the most candid."

"I do not agree to that—not the least in the world," she cried with commendable energy.

Again Hubert's face changed. Why was he so sensitive to-day? The fun passed out of it for pain to take its place.

"What! you do not love me as much as I love you?" he said in a disturbed voice. "You tell me that seriously, Naomi?"

She turned to him with a mocking little mouth and mischievous arched brows, meaning to carry on the play. Lovers find nothing too silly as the medium of verbal caressing; and silly as was this little interlude, it served its

purpose. But her mocking smile and saucy answer died on her lips. There was something in her lover's face not to be met by a joke.

"Love you, Hubert?—as much as you love me?" she repeated. "Do you need to ask?" Then with a sudden blush and the sweetest, loveliest air of self-surrender, she added—both her hands now on one of his: "Yes, I do love you as much as you love me. If love could be weighed, as we weighed the honeycomb yesterday, perhaps mine would be the most!"

"That is impossible, Naomi," he answered gravely. "You might as well say you could add to infinity or lengthen eternity!" He put his disengaged arm round her and drew her to him. "My darling, my own darling," he said, all his heart in his voice; "I love you as I never loved living woman before."

Naomi caught at the words. That black drop which we all have in our hearts under different names and shapes was in hers a

certain form of jealousy,—the jealousy, the exactingness, of a pure and inexperienced woman demanding as much as she gave.

“Then you have loved before?” she said a little coldly, instinctively taking away her hands.

“Not as I love you,” he answered, trying to cover his mistake by extra fervour. “I love you as no man ever loved since the world began! You do not know what I feel for you, Naomi. You are like God and heaven to me! You are my good angel: and God gave you to me! I love you, darling, almost more than a man should—more than is well for my peace.”

His passion gained her. What woman could have resisted?

“Give me your peace, I will take care of it,” she said with infinite tenderness. “If we love each other, Hubert, no harm can come to us. Nothing but death can separate us, and even that will not divide us.”

“Nothing but death? You swear that?” he said. “Only death will separate us, Naomi, and even that will not divide us?”

“Yes,” she answered solemnly; “I swear it.”

“Without reservation?”

“What reservation should I have?” she returned, with an incredulous little smile. “The only reservation would be if you had loved any one else as you love me, or had done anything wrong; and that is too absurd to imagine!”

She looked at him with her soft grey eyes as full of womanly love as his had been of the man's stronger passion. He was right. Those eyes expressed her admiration of him as plainly as if her lips had uttered all that was in her heart of praise and hymn to his honour. To her he was the perfect man—flawless, faultless—and she was not ashamed to show what she would not have dared to say.

The remembrance of that past sin flowed like the salt waters of tears over his head. Like a spectre Mariquita Delmare again seemed to float before him, filling the whole air with her baleful beauty; but for his best exorcism he looked again into Naomi's upturned face, and soothed himself with that futile anodyne: "She will never know!"

The tie between these two young people had in it something more than love, for Hubert, at the risk of his own life, had saved that of Geoffrey Ponsonby, Naomi's only brother; and thus the acquaintance which then began was founded on the deepest feelings of our human nature. To the Ponsonbys Hubert was an incarnation of divine power to whom they owed anew that beloved life so nearly lost; while to him they had the claim which conferring a benefit establishes on him who confers it. They gave him the devotion of gratitude, but he gave them the even stronger feeling of

responsibility. The life he had saved he felt in some measure belonged to him to care for; and as he was eight years older than Geoffrey—thirty to the younger man's two and twenty—he took his obligation seriously, and was like the boy's elder brother, even before his engagement with Naomi gave him the additional right of future relationship.

All things come to an end, and this lovely idyl had to end with the rest. The westering sun brought with its slanting rays the prosaic claims of dinner and domestic life generally; and the young people had nothing for it but to go back to Ivy Lodge, and do the best they could with the verandah and the moonlight, against the background of the lighted room where gentle Mrs. Ponsonby played Patience by herself, and thought of the time when she too had sat out in the summer moonlight with her beloved, as happy as Naomi was now.

As they came to the house they were met at

the door by Mrs. Ponsonby in a state of unusual excitement.

"What is it, mother?" asked Naomi, who had that double sense which is given by keen perceptions.

"I have had a letter from Geoff," said Mrs. Ponsonby, a little breathlessly.

"Well?—what?—what does he say?" asked Hubert.

"Such a foolish boy!—so foolish and so wrong! He has engaged himself to a lady whom he confesses to be older than himself, and a widow too. It is madness!"

"Who is she?" again asked Hubert.

"An American," was the answer.

"What American?" he asked quickly. He shivered slightly, as once before to-day on the sands.

"A Mrs. Marillier," was the answer.

Hubert drew a deep breath, and the blood came back into his face.

“Geoffrey says she is wonderfully beautiful,” the mother went on to say; “and as good as she is lovely. She is very well connected—belongs to an old Virginian family—and has money of her own, so that, as he says, she does not take him for his. At all events there it is; and now what am I to do? I cannot allow it to go on,” she added, woman-like answering her own question; “but what am I to do?”

“Opposition to a thing of this kind does not do much good,” said Hubert. “Men have to wear through their own experiences.”

“But he is not a man—he is only a boy!” cried Mrs. Ponsonby. “He has had no experience of life, beyond that to be had at Cambridge, which cannot be much. He is not accustomed yet to the management of the estate—and the idea of an engagement at his age, and with a widow older than himself, is preposterous! It cannot be allowed. I will not allow it!”

“If he loves her, my dear, he will not break with her, even though a mother disapproves,” said Hubert. “Why should he? That is the first thing he will say to himself. If he has committed himself and gained her affections he is so far bound to her by honour; and if she has money and all that, and is of known rank and parentage, and there is nothing against her, why should he break with her because he is only twenty-two? That is a fault which cures itself every day! You see we must look at it from his point of view, not only our own. To you and to us all it may be foolish and premature; but to him it is the sublimest wisdom and an honourable engagement.”

“Then do you advise me to countenance such criminal absurdity?” said Mrs. Ponsonby, hotly.

“For the present, in a fashion, sprinkling a little cold water judiciously, and not going in for a shower bath,” he answered. “A boy of

Geoff's age wants more careful guidance than a man. He has to be led very gently—very tenderly—and the thread must be of silk and invisible!"

"That is so true!" said Naomi, to whom Hubert was incarnate wisdom.

She would have said the same, however, had he advocated strenuous opposition and parental coercion; so that her opinion was not of much value.

But Mrs. Ponsonby still fumed, and the only ray of comfort that she could find in the present distressful moment was when Hubert promised to write very seriously to her boy, and to begin that process of judicious sprinkling which he advised her to adopt. But, above all, he was to find out everything there was to know about this Mrs. Marillier—this beautiful American with money—this widow, a little older than the unmatured and well-endowed young man she had condescended to accept as

her future husband. With which promise the poor woman was forced to be content; though, indeed, there was not much content for any one—for after this question of Geoffrey and his fascinating widow had been so far arranged, and Hubert had time to look at his own letters, he found one from his lawyer which cut short his stay at Ivy Lodge, and sent him back at once to Cumberland, where his place was. It was a letter which admitted of no denial, and of business which admitted of no delay. He must pack up to-night and be off by the first train to-morrow morning—those sweet idyls on the sands rudely and roughly interrupted, and his beloved left to the cold keeping of resignation.

All lovers' partings are sad, and their melancholy forebodings are as universal as the tears which express, and the kisses which seem rather to confirm than to banish them. It was to Naomi, and to Hubert too, as if their sun

had set for ever. There was no more daylight for them, and no more summer. The chill of death had fallen on their happiness; for at the best their letters would be only a kind of twilight—only the autumn flush for the summer glory. But it had to be done, and he must go. The time of probation would soon be over now. This was August, and they would be married in October. Two months—an eternity to the separated and impatient young, but to the more accurate reckoners of time a mere nothing. So they tried to comfort each other as with trembling voices and pale lips they bade each other farewell and said :

“It will not be for long!”

Geoffrey's answer to the coldly cautious letter of his mother was characteristic of his boyish love. To her diplomacy he opposed the impetuosity of a first passion and the blindness of unlimited trust. His eyes were filled with

but the one light ; and like a newly-converted zealot he was anxious that she should share in the grace he had gained. Without giving time for denial, he announced his arrival with his future bride that very evening. To see her was to love her, he said ; and the best excuse he could offer for what might seem his rashness in engaging himself at his age was—herself. Wherefore his mother and Naomi must expect them that evening ; and he knew that in this visit, hurried and unceremonious as it was, he had done the best thing for them and for her, and that they would congratulate him on his good fortune in securing the most beautiful and the noblest woman on the face of the earth.

No answer could be given to this letter ; and to telegraph a refusal that should meet them midway and turn them back on their journey was not quite like gentle Mrs. Ponsonby, whose worst moods were merely fretfulness, never

rising into anger nor deepening into sullenness. Thus mother and sister had nothing for it but to make the best of things as they were, and to hope that this new woman was really the phoenix Geoffrey's love had painted her.

So far he had calculated rightly. When Mrs. Ponsonby and Naomi came face to face with this fair marvel, they no longer wondered at the boyish infatuation which had staked so heavily on love and trust. She was so beautiful! She was so graceful in all her movements, so sweet and tender in her manner, and yet so bright in speech and intelligence! She had the loveliest little ways that ever woman had; she said the most charming things; and she had the daintiest accent—half French, half American—that gave her voice, which was naturally harsh and grating, a kind of caressing intonation by which its native hardness was made as lovely as soft music. Her dress was a dream of art; her face a poem of beauty. She

had bright golden hair—very bright gold—with dark eyebrows and dark lashes, and the loveliest complexion of milk and roses. Her eyes were like stars, quick, glancing, and of varying expression. Sometimes they were as holy as a saint's, and sometimes they were veiled as if with a substance, letting not a thought, not a feeling show through. But varied as their expression was, they were watchful eyes—always watchful; eyes that seemed to listen as well as see, like those of men accustomed to danger and dependent for salvation on their own quickness of apprehension and clearness of prevision. And the lashes cast the most curious little rim of blackness round the lids; and the red of her lips was of the clearest and most sharply defined outline imaginable. No blurring here; no mingling of red and white through the disfiguring medium of tears, nor even through the blush-rose bruise of kisses! Altogether she

was delightful—splendidly delightful; and the mother and daughter were fascinated, as Geoffrey knew they would be—as, years ago, Christabel was fascinated by the Lady Geraldine.

The small round table at the side was full of photographs. Side by side with Naomi—Naomi following the mother and Geoffrey—was the portrait of Hubert Gainsborough. Mrs. Marillier looking over the room as strangers do, came in due time to this table and the four photographs in one line. She caught her breath as one suddenly surprised, and the blood gathered round her heart—though it did not leave her cheek nor lips paler than before; but she had the undaunted spirit of one playing for high stakes, with the full consciousness of what she risked and what she might win, and it was a principle with her to face her dangers on the instant.

“Is that another brother?” she asked quite naturally, taking the photographs in her hand

as if to examine them critically. "How good they all are!—but I did not know you had an elder brother, Geoffrey. You never told me that. I do not see much likeness, however," she added smilingly to Mrs. Ponsonby. "He is not like you nor Naomi nor my boy."

"I forgot to tell you about him," said Geoffrey. "I have forgotten everything of late! No, that is not a brother—yet; though he is almost more than one. He is the dearest old fellow in the world—Hubert Gainsborough—and he is going to marry Naomi."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Marillier, with a soft smile, turning to her future sister-in-law. "How happy you must be! If he is as lovely a man as mine, and you are as content as I am, you have nothing to complain of!"

"He is very nice, and I am quite happy," said Naomi.

Then they all laughed; and the rest of the evening passed as such evenings do, on velvet,

where the hours are wreathed with flowers and Time is shod in gold.

But upstairs in her own room the woman who called herself Mariquita Marillier had to face a very different state of things. The ghost of her bad past had risen up before her when least expected and most unwelcome ; and she had to reason out her position, and calculate her chances of escape from the dangers threatening her like wild beasts prowling round an open harbour.

“ Can I dare it ? ” she thought ; “ or shall I give it all up ? Will he have the cruelty, the dishonour, to betray me ? No, he dare not ! His interests are as much at stake as mine. We are both in the same boat. If I am shipwrecked he will be swamped too ; for such ignorant innocents as these will see no difference between us. I can tell my own story, and it will go hard with me if I do not cut the ground from under his feet if he is brutal

enough to put a spoke in my wheel. I will brave it, and I will defy him. He used to be fond of me; and men who have once loved a woman as he loved me have always a soft spot left. They are not like us, the fools—and I will take my chance!”

“She is perfectly lovely, and fascinating to an extraordinary degree,” Naomi wrote to her lover; “but both mother and I like her so much better when we are with her than when we do not see her. I cannot explain why, nor can mother, but we feel when she is away from us that she is not quite so nice, and we both have to be conquered again. She always does conquer us; that I must confess. It is very odd, but do you not understand what I mean? But she is so clever, and she must be so good! She talks a great deal about God and the Noble Life, and how people have to live for others not themselves, and to walk by the law of the spirit not of the mere intellect. She is, so she

says of herself, a mystic : and I, who am stupid, do not always understand her. But she is so sharp and clever ! She knows everything—all we think, and sometimes what we had not made clear to ourselves till she, as it were, interpreted our own thoughts. I think she sees that odd change of feeling in us, for she said yesterday to mother and me, when we were walking in the garden : ‘The impression people make and the impression they leave are sometimes so different ! I have often felt that living charm of a personality, and then a certain coldness in absence. But I have always put the defect down to myself. I think it is my own failing in sympathy—some note wanting in my own chord of harmony—not any want or failing in the person. When I am with these people whom I love in presence and fall off from in absence, their magnetism supplies my own deficiency and the full chord is sounded—the notes wanting to me are given

by them.' So perhaps it is mother's and my own fault, as she seemed to hint; and she is very charming. She says she is one year older than Geoff—twenty-three; and she does not look more, excepting at the end of the evening, when she gets tired. Then she looks thirty and more; and her face quite changes. If she were not such a pure-hearted noble creature both mother and I would think she painted; but we do not like to even imagine it, because women who paint cannot possibly be nice—and she is more than nice! Her husband was a stockbroker in San Francisco; and she has a pretty Spanish name—*Mariquita*—and I believe, but I am not quite sure, that her maiden name was *Delmare*."

So now Hubert understood it all. What he had dimly feared was true, and the woman whom he knew to be unfit for the companionship of even the ordinarily frail was the affianced wife of Geoffrey Ponsonby—the boy

for whose life he had made himself in a manner responsible—the brother of his own future wife. Mariquita Marillier, the sister-in-law of Naomi—Mariquita, the woman whom he had known as the wife of Auguste Delmare! The ghost of the past had risen up against him—the after crop was sprouting—and the mills of God were grinding, not slowly now! This marriage must be prevented if it broke Geoffrey's heart and his own. He knew Naomi's high standard of morality; he knew, too, the strain of jealousy which lifted up her love from what else might have been something like the abjectness of devotion and gave it the dignity of self-respect. She was utterly ignorant of life as it is; and she was of the school which makes no distinction between men and women. The little that she knew of vice—all in the clouds as it was—made the dereliction of the one as shameful as the abandonment of the other; and it had not been

Hubert's duty to enlighten her. He therefore knew how she would feel and where he should stand. It would be the overthrowing evidence, and perhaps her love would go with her ideal. She had often said that her love for him was so great because of her respect. Her perfect man as he was—what would it be when she found out how imperfect he had been?—jealous as well as pure; when she learned that he had loved so passionately and sinned so deeply, what would she do? And if even she forgave him—but she would not—would not the bloom of her nature, of her very love, be gone? Would it not be like the violation of her soul, and the acceptance of his sin because she had lost her virginal horror of evil?

Still it had to be done, come what would. He must be so far faithful to that higher law which sacrifices ease and happiness and love itself to duty and the right.

It was impossible to go to Ivy Lodge for the

next day or two, but Hubert wrote to Geoffrey asking him what he knew of the fascinating widow, other than by her own report?—where he had met her?—who had vouched for her?—what he knew of her past history, her family, her money itself? Had he had any corroboration of her own story, or had he taken everything on trust? The world was full of these desultory women, these quasi adventuresses who thought to efface in a foreign country the tainted record of their own. He must be quite sure who it was he was trusting, and who it was he proposed to give as a daughter to his mother and a sister to Naomi.

The boy wrote back a fiery letter, as was to be expected. To have saved his life from drowning did not entitle Hubert to doubt his beloved—one of the noblest, purest, most saintly women that ever lived. If he heard her talk as she did last night, he would know then what a priceless treasure he (Geoffrey) had found,

and would blush for his base suspicions. Besides, *he* (Geoffrey) was satisfied, and he was the person most nearly concerned. His marriage was to take place now at once. There was nothing to wait for ; and his mother had consented. She saw the exquisite loveliness, the rare nobility of Mariquita's nature ; and Naomi too loved her. Yet, sweet good girl as Naomi was, she was not equal to Mariquita in sublimity of thought. Hubert would love her too. He must come now at once to Ivy Lodge and join the circle of worshippers. He could not resist ; no one could.

The lad blew off the steam as he wrote, and by the time he ended had got through his anger, and was once more the old, joyous, irresponsible boy-lover who saw no dangers and no difficulties anywhere. He was so happy that he could afford to be magnanimous and to forgive the insult of the doubt.

How well Hubert knew it all ! The false

modesties, the artificial refinement, the high poetic moralities said beneath the moon—the lies, deceptions, devilries practised in the face of day;—the cleverness which made infamy look like purity overcome by love, and gave to the putrescent shimmer of corruption the glory of God's own sun! He knew it all, and understood the net in which she had taken those dear ones in their quiet Devonshire home; for had he not himself once been held fast even as the boy was held now—as Naomi and her mother were held?

They met alone on the sands, where he had sat with Naomi on that blessed day of summer only so short a time ago by the passage of the days, but so long—long as eternity—by the dating of events.

“I give you your choice,” he said. “Leave the house as you like, secretly or openly—take your own way of rupture—but break the

engagement and set the boy free at any cost, or I will break it by telling all I know. In the former way you keep your fair fame here ; in the latter you lose it. This marriage has to be cancelled in either case."

"By the first Mr. Hubert Gainsborough escapes scot-free ; by the second he suffers with me," said Mariquita, quietly.

"That I know and am prepared for," was Hubert's answer.

"And companionship in misfortune is pleasant," she returned. "If you are really set on this absurd bit of Quixotism you shall smart for it, *mon cher*. I am not disposed to be made the scapegoat, and sent into the wilderness carrying your sins as well as my own. We will go together, Hubert."

"I am ready," said Hubert, sternly.

"To give up Naomi ?"

"To give up Naomi that I may save Geoffrey."

She laughed in a mocking kind of way.

"You were not such a tepid lover to me," she said. "I do not think you would have given up *me* for any such high-falutin morality! At least I know that Mr. Delmare—my husband then—and the seventh commandment did not terrify you!"

"I did not give you up till I knew you," said Hubert. "While I believed in you I would have gone down into hell for you. To have died for you would have been easy."

"And I for you," she said, suddenly changing her tone; "for I loved you, Hubert—loved you faithfully—loved you as I never loved before nor have since. I had to deceive you. Bad as I was how could I tell my sad story to a man so young as you were then, with all your illusions unbroken? It would have killed you. I loved you, my darling, and you loved me. Will not the memory of that love soften you? I want only the opportunity to be good. I am

not bad at heart—I never was. I have been the victim of a cruel fate and the sport of circumstances, but I was never really vicious. Help me to redeem myself and to make Geoffrey's life blessed, as I can and will make it. He will never know. I will be so good to him! Help me, Hubert, for old times' sake!"

She spoke with inconceivable passion. Her words flowed like a stream of fiery lava; and as she uttered her last appeal she knelt on the sands at his feet and took his hand in both of hers, carrying it to her lips.

Lovely in her passion, graceful in her self-abandonment, with the eloquence of despair in her voice and manner, with the wonderful magnetism of her nature shining in her eyes and drawing out the very heart of her hearer, she was at this moment as dangerous to Hubert's resolve as she had formerly been to his soul. Her appeal was one which touches every true man. To help her to be good!—to help her to



"A BOAT DRIFTED NOISELESSLY ROUND THE HEADLAND, AND NAOMI AND GEOFFREY SPRANG ON SHORE."

redeem herself! — to lift her from the mire where, as she said, a cruel fate had cast her, and where he himself had helped to fling her, and set her cleansed among the shining ranks of the redeemed! If he would not! If for the shadowy idealism of exclusiveness he failed to do the real good laid before him to do!

Genuine tears came into her eyes; her painted lips quivered with a genuine emotion. Hubert put his hand over his eyes. He was trembling like a leaf, for the task was very hard.

“It cannot be!” he said with a sob. “For her sake and his, I must not!”

A boat drifted noiselessly round the headland, and Naomi and Geoffrey sprang on shore.

“God in Heaven, what does this mean?” cried Geoffrey, dashing up the beach, to seize Hubert by the throat.

Naomi stood where she was, paralyzed and as if in a dream.

Mariquita started to her feet. She read her doom in Hubert's face, now stern and stiffened as if carved in stone, and she knew that the game was lost.

"I was rehearsing an old play with my former lover, Hubert Gainsborough," she said in her hard, harsh, strident voice;—"the man who seduced me when I was Auguste Delmare's wife."

Years had passed since this bolt fell from the blue and shattered the lives of all concerned. How often the summer had faded into the autumn, and the autumn had died into winter since then, and what tragedies had wrought out their course to the end;—Geoffrey's lifeless body cast up by the tide, how drowned, whether by accident or design, no one ever knew;—the beautiful woman by whom had been wrought all this woe, dead of misery and want, stranded like so much drift wood on

the shores of time and disease;—Naomi and her mother, like dim spectres of their former selves, wandering restlessly, aimlessly, joylessly through the world; Hubert banished like another Adam from the paradise where he had lived with Love and walked with God;—all the roses dead, all the sunlight gone;—what a term of isolation!—what a blank life was to the three remaining! The two who had found their rest in the grave were happier than those who still lived beneath the sky. Sorrow, shame, futile despair and as futile repentance—what an after-crop of that bitter harvest of youthful folly!

“Ought I to have pardoned him?” said Naomi, often to herself; but Hubert never asked his heart: “Ought I to have concealed it?” Cost all it had, it was better than a life of deception, the white-washing of infamy, and the association of Naomi and Geoffrey with the wife of Auguste Delmare—the widow of Marillier, the stockbroker of San Francisco.

Long parted, they met again one winter moonlight night in the Coliseum at Rome. This place of death and ruin, filled with the memories of love, joy, glory, and martyrdom, all buried deep in the past, it was the fitting place for them to meet. And it was the fitting time—night for day; winter for summer; the pale moon, which threw black fantastic shadows on a ruin, for the glorious sun which had touched all living nature with gold and colour. When they met it was almost as if they too were ghosts with the rest; but that momentary hesitation of each passed like a cloud, and their hands clasped, one the other, too frankly for even the shadow of doubt.

“Shall we never bury our dead, Naomi?” he asked. “Will you never forgive me?—never reinstate me?”

“Not while she lives. She stands between us,” said Naomi; but she spoke faintly, and as if with reluctance.

"She is dead," he answered; "only the ghost of the past divides us. Is that as strong as the living present?"

"Can I ever trust or believe you again?" she asked sadly.

"If the anguish of all these years gives assurance, yes," he returned. "Oh, Naomi, did you not swear to be always true to me?—always, always, and through everything?"

"I have been true," she said. "I have never loved any one else, not for a moment."

"But if you love me?"

She turned away her head. She did not wish the moonlight to shine on the tears that came into her eyes.

He took her hands and drew them up to his breast, and she did not resist.

"But if you love me?" he said again, very gently.

She hesitated;—her heart beating fast, her bosom palpitating. Then suddenly, with the

old sweet action of self-surrender, she turned to him looking at him with the same eyes of love as used to look at him in the summer-time so long ago.

“I have always loved you, Hubert,” she said softly; “and I have never ceased to pray for you. Perhaps God has heard me and has given us back to each other as an answer to my prayers for pardon—pardon for myself as well as for you. Perhaps I was too hard—will you accept my repentance?”

REBECCA'S REMORSE.

By JAMES PAYN.



JAMES PAYN.

It is not unusual with young men of philanthropical or religious instincts to seek their work, on taking orders, in the East End of London, and to turn their backs upon fashionable congregations and gift slippers; and yet those “angels of fiction,” as they have been termed, the doctors, are never credited with the same self-sacrificing motives. No medical man is ever described as preferring a poor neighbourhood to a rich one; he goes to Bayswater if he

cannot get to Belgravia, and to Bloomsbury if he cannot get to Bayswater, but further east than Bloomsbury he is not to be found—in fiction. This is not in accordance with his angelic character; with his sending in his little account receipted to his poor patient; with his giving him the money for a seaside holiday instead of a prescription; or with the furnishing of every comfort for mind and body which that marvellous diagnosis of his has discerned to be necessary at the first glance. This is hard, as there really *are* doctors in the East End of London, and I once had a practice there myself.

It was not a good one in point of remuneration, and there were plenty of patients; the sort of “practice” that makes one “perfect” from a professional point of view; and at the same time absolves one from the income tax. I confess, however, that I did not make this choice of my own free will. “Not grace, nor zeal,” but a quarrel with my respected uncle, on

whom I was entirely dependent, had been the cause of it. I had, I allow, considerably exceeded my allowance at college, and my hospital career in London had been expensive; but his conduct in buying a practice for me in the east instead of the west, as a punishment for, what he did not hesitate to term, my reckless extravagance, was, I think it will be admitted, vindictive. He made me, however, an allowance, which, though one would have called it moderate in a more fashionable locality, was ample enough for such a neighbourhood. Pleasures were very cheap there, and not very attractive. Its concerts were not, at the time of which I am speaking, classical; though of late years music of quite a high class has emigrated thither, and Bethnal Green itself has become an art centre. The dances one was invited to (by advertisement) were of a public nature, and were too much of a maritime character to suit the landsman. There was

no shop where you could spend money to any extent save that wonderful emporium where not only lions and tigers are as plentiful as chickens in Leadenhall Market, but much finer "curios" are to be found than can be picked up in Piccadilly. But lions were not in my way (though I had kept a "tiger" at the University), and I was much too young to care for curios, a taste for which does not usually develop till the mind has given way a little.

This enforced economy had, however, one very pleasant side to it; I generally found myself with money in my pocket, a most unusual experience with an East End doctor. There is nothing more distressing to him—if he is a good fellow, or even if he has a human heart in his breast—than the knowledge that half the patients who come under his care are not so much in need of medicine, as of the necessities of life, with which he is unable to supply them. No one knows what poverty is, who

has not seen the East End during a bad time; for my part it was a revelation to me, and when one saw how far, not a shilling, but even a penny was made to go, it gave one a nasty jar to remember the hundreds one had squandered for spending's sake. At first, indeed, brought face to face with such urgent want, one's heart made one lose one's head, and I found myself, not from philanthropy, but from fastidious disgust at squalor and wretchedness, supporting some of the idlest and most worthless scoundrels in the parish; but after a while one grew wiser or less emotional, and learnt discretion, which is the better part of charity. It was a good school for me, in many ways, though I did not like being sent to it.

People talk of "genteel poverty" as being the worst sort of it, but at the risk of being thought material and commonplace, I venture to remark that abject poverty—the halfpenny-worth of bread, and the sack instead of a bed

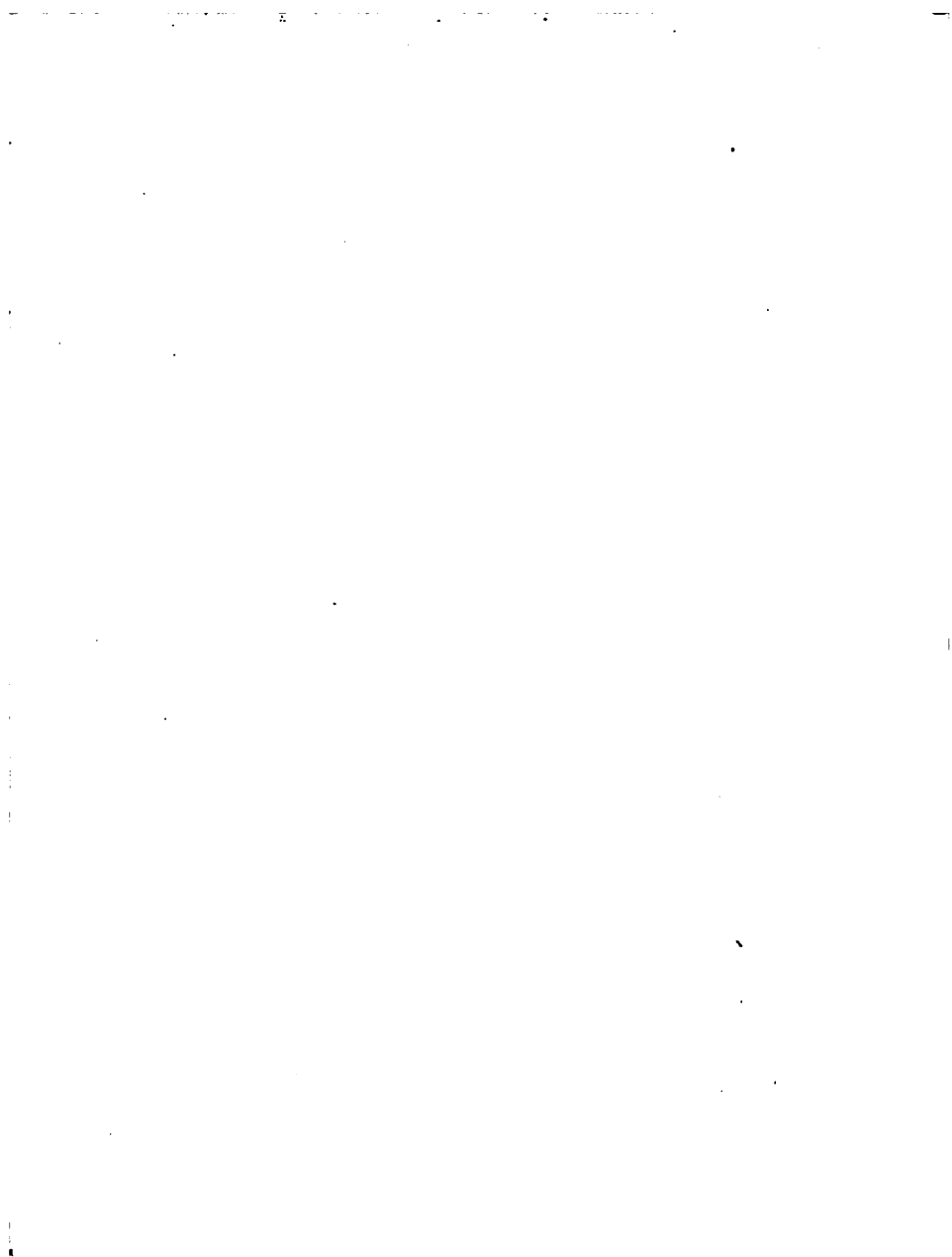
on the floor—is much more hard to bear. There are degrees even in that, or rather the same wretchedness seems greater or less, according to the habits of those who endure it. It is possible, though by no means easy, to be cleanly under the most sordid conditions; the house—or rather the one room—may be swept, though it cannot be garnished; the broken tea-cup may be washed; the ragged blanket mended, but when squalor is added to want, pity is lost in disgust, and the attempt to cling to the decencies of life is the most touching of all the attributes of the very poor. It is not, God help them, often made; when everything else has gone by the board, it seems useless to look after the hen-coop.

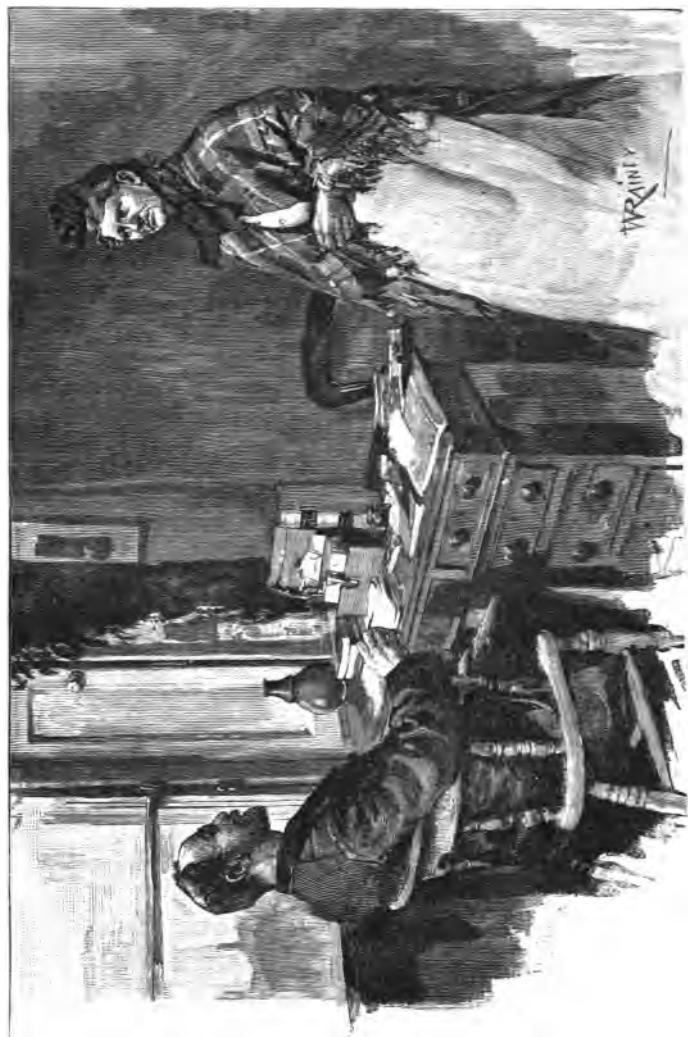
Star Court, a locality where some of my most wretched clients dwelt, made very little effort in this direction, though, as a rule, they were decent people who dwelt there. We have all a tendency to live among those of our own

calling—how else (since they are far from loving one another) can the congregation of doctors in Wimpole Street, or lawyers in Bedford Row, be accounted for?—and when we have no calling, among those of our own taste and habits, and so Star Court had become known in time as a quiet street. New-comers, impecunious as the rest of my colony, but averse to rows and ruffianism, gravitated thither sooner or later; I used to fancy there were more people who had seen better days there than elsewhere; but, at all events, they could hardly have seen worse. It was a miserable spot; but it was not necessary to ask the policeman to keep his eye on you, when you went into Star Court, which was but a reasonable precaution in some other localities.

My first introduction to it was owed to Rebecca Bent, who called upon me one very warm evening in late August to ask for medical advice. I had seen her before, for she had

been charwoman for a few weeks at the little house I occupied, when one of my two domestics was away. I remembered her, because she had worked so hard ("like a horse," my cook had said) during that temporary engagement, and given much greater satisfaction than charwomen usually do. Otherwise there was nothing about her to enlist the memory. She was not young—five and forty, one would say, at least, and she had not even the remains of good looks. A tall, big-boned masculine woman, her only claim on the sentimental emotions that look of hopeless discontent worn by so many of her class and age, she was certainly not an attractive person. She was strong enough, however, and to all appearance healthy, and the last person I should have expected to need my professional services. Still, strange as it may seem in the case of those who have so many genuine troubles, it is not more unusual for the very poor to imagine





"WELL, REBECCA, NOTHING GONE WRONG, I HOPE?"

themselves ill, when there is little the matter with them, than for a fine lady; if they cut their finger, they think they are like to die. And the woman had rung the surgery bell, which (though scarcely in the City sense) meant business.

"Well, Rebecca, nothing gone wrong, I hope?" I said cheerfully. "You *look* all right."

"Appearances are deceitful, sir, Heavens knows," she answered, with what seemed, for so trite a proverb, a most unnecessary significance. "It's weakness so that one cannot lift one's hand to one's head, and thirst so that one wants a bucketful, and a cough that seems to tear one's inside out, and besides that there's fever."

"So bad as that, is it?"

I made the usual examination. Her pulse was all right, her tongue quite a pleasure to look at, as compared with most of those organs submitted to my inspection (especially that

most common variety, the drunken tongue), she had not coughed at all throughout the ordeal, and there was not a trace of fever.

"You're nervous about yourself, my good woman," I said, "which in your case surprises me; you're too hard a worker to have such fancies."

"Still, them are the symptoms," she answered, doggedly, "and I want a prescription." And she held out her hand, with eighteenpence in it. Such is not the fee in Wimpole Street, but in the East End we are less exacting; and we have the same excuse for taking less as the barrister gave for taking half a crown instead of a guinea; it is often all our clients have in the world.

"I don't want your money, Rebecca, any more than you want my prescription," I said.

"For mercy's sake give it me," she cried, imploringly. "It's not for me, sir; it's for my sister."

"For your sister? I did not know you had a sister. How is it possible for me to prescribe for a patient I have never seen?"

"She is ill, sir, deadly ill," she pleaded.

"The more reason I should see her."

"But she will not see *you*, sir; she made me promise that I would not bring you. She has seen no one but me for years. She's an invalid."

"Well, of course, and has an invalid's fancies, no doubt. Come, take me to her." And I took up my hat.

Then, to my amazement, the big, strong woman burst into tears. "Oh, sir, you don't understand me," she sobbed. "She is not accustomed to be seen like this; you will break her heart."

"Pooh, pooh!" I said; "on the contrary, it is my business to mend it."

Not that I had the least belief in what she said; for, indeed, I began to think that her

sister might be a *lusus naturæ*, of which I had seen more than one in my East End practice. Poor creatures that were not good enough, or bad enough, for a show; two-headed nightingales who had just missed their chance, as it were, by half a head; elephant-men with imperfectly developed trunks. When poverty goes hand-in-hand with disfigurement, it cannot close door and window, or hide in secluded grounds; but, still, it will shrink from observation all it can, like some shy creature on the seashore whose shell is too small for it.

Seeing it was useless to argue with me, Rebecca led the way to Star Court. Dry, dusty, airless, but without sunshine—because the tall black houses are huddled too close together—it was, indeed, a cheerless spot for the sound, far more for the sick to dwell in. A few ragged children were dancing in the centre of it round a barrel-organ, to the superficial eye an example of how happiness is found

in every spot. But well I knew that in more than one of these abodes lay women and children down with fever, to each of whom every note of the instrument was torture. But there was no liveried footman there to warn the unwelcome musician, or policeman to bid him "move on"—the police in that neighbourhood had their hands full of more serious matters. Up three flights of stairs we went, steep enough to suggest the aid of the banisters had they been less grimy and slimy, and at last into an attic with a sloping roof.

At the first glance, I thought a sunbeam had found its way there; but it was only a head of golden hair upon a coarse pillow. The face was turned to the wall, and Rebecca held her finger up—stained with toil and rough with work—to warn me that the invalid was sleeping.

Why I noted the finger was because of the contrast it exhibited to the thin, white, delicate hand that lay outside the blanket, for counter-

pane there was none. There was a marriage-ring on the hand, and it was the only article in the room which would have fetched a shilling at the pawnbroker's. There was a chair, but it had no back, and a deal table, one leg of which, much shorter than the others, was supplemented by a brick. Upon it stood a mug with wallflowers in it, the only decoration the apartment could boast. Yet all was scrupulously clean down to the bare boards, unrelieved by a shred of carpet. I had seen hundreds of homes before shorn of every comfort, but never one so cared for in its last extremity by hand and eye. Even the brick on which the table stood was washed, and resembled one from a child's toy-box.

"That is a good sign, her sleeping, is it not, sir?" whispered Rebecca, eagerly. We had entered very softly, and doubtless the ear of the invalid had only caught the footstep she expected; but when her sister spoke, she answered, in faint, reproachful tones—

"I am not asleep; and you have broken your word, Rebecca."

"It was not my fault, my darling, indeed it wasn't. Oh! did I not tell you, doctor, how it would be?" And the great gaunt woman wrung her hands distressfully.

"It was not your sister's fault that I am here," I interposed gently. "She would have had me believe she had come to consult me on her own account, but I saw through her. It was my duty to come, and it will be a pleasure to me if I can do you any good."

I had caught sight for a moment of the face of an angel, or rather, as it seemed to me, of one who was about to join the heavenly choir; but even while I was speaking she had put up both her hands before it. It was a poor protection, for they were so thin and fragile that one could almost see through them, but the gesture was eloquent enough.

"You need not be afraid of the doctor, my

dear ; he is not like any one else," said Rebecca, soothingly. A compliment evidently addressed to my profession, and not to myself. "She'll come round after a bit, sir," she whispered encouragingly ; "but she has not seen a stranger—not to speak to—for years, and your coming is a terrible trial to her."

I nodded indifferently, as though such shyness was a common trait ; for it is a point of honour with us doctors never to be surprised, but to say, "just so," and incline the head at the angle of assent, when a case is introduced to us, whether it be mumps or the leprosy. Moreover, I could have waited patiently for some time to get a glimpse of that face again. It was the face of a girl rather than of a young woman, though, paradoxical as this may seem, there was little of youth in it. The continuance of some distressing emotion, or possibly of physical pain, had, as it will do, driven youth away from it, and instead of "the ver-

meil hue of health," had given it an unnatural flush, as if autumn had laid its fiery finger on a leaf of springtime; but the features were perfect, and the large blue eyes the most beautiful I had ever beheld. They had only expressed shrinking and affright at my presence, but it was easier to imagine them as the natural homes of love and tenderness. Around this picture, the beauty of which had something unearthly about it, or rather, as it struck my professional eye, was only to be for a short time on earth, that gleaming hair made a golden frame.

A greater contrast to her sister it was not possible for one woman to be to another. Presently she seemed to recover herself a little, and I ventured to put to her a few questions founded upon what Rebecca had told me. She answered them very gently, but in so different a tone that they might well, as in her case, have had no personal application. This was

a bad sign ; for her disease was consumption, where, if the patient is not, as usual, sanguine, or has little interest in the result, the outlook is gloomy indeed. After recommending several things, which I simply said should be sent in, I took my leave. Rebecca followed me out of the room.

"She does not understand," she whispered piteously. "You must not think her ungrateful, sir. Her mind——" she hesitated.

"Is fixed on other things than food and physic," I said, smiling. "It is a common case with one so ill as she is."

"She is not dying, doctor?"

The woman's swarthy face grew pale, and her eyes distended with sheer terror. I had seen relatives anxious about the fate of their dear ones, upon grounds the most momentous—spiritual considerations—but never one so moved as this one ; and yet she did not strike me as being a religious woman. As a rule the

very poor take these matters with philosophy, as well they may. If there is another world (which they do not always believe) to which their invalid is going, it naturally strikes them that it needs must be an improvement on the one he is leaving; and at all events there will be one less to feed and clothe. But in the case of Rebecca, her emotion was infinitely deeper than mere anxiety or regret; it seemed to shake the very roots of her being.

"I do not say your sister is dying, my good woman," I replied. "My examination of her, as you know, has been very slight; but I confess that her condition impresses me unfavourably. She seems, to be in very low spirits about herself."

"Heaven help her, well she may be," groaned Rebecca.

"And yet she does not seem alarmed as some do."

"Alarmed? What has she to be afraid of?

It is others, like me, who have to be afraid. She has done no wrong; if there is a heaven above, she must needs go there."

"Well, that, after all, is the great thing, and should give you comfort, for you will meet again."

I was a young man at the time, with such platitudes at the tip of my tongue. That they are all well meant is the best that can be said of them. When a child is going to school for the first time, we say "the months will soon pass;" when a friend is emigrating for his health, "in a few years we shall see you again strong and well," and since, under these circumstances, this "vacant chaff well-meant for grain" is found to be inefficacious, how can it be otherwise when the separation is complete, the bourne whither our dear one is bound one from which there is no return, and our re-joining him without date, and doubtful? A clergyman may say these things; from his

mouth they may have their effect ; but though "Never" is a hard word, we have most of us to bear it. From the doctor, at all events, a glance of the eye, and a touch of the hand in token of human sympathy, are, it is my experience, more welcome to the mother that is about to be childless, to the wife that is about to be a widow, than this vague consolation.

" 'Comfort,' and 'meet again,' " she echoed, with a sort of contemptuous despair, and shaking her head, like one with the palsy, re-entered the sick-room.

The whole situation amazed and perplexed me. On all other topics the woman was what one would have expected her to be. Save for a somewhat exceptional honesty, cleanliness, and diligence, Rebecca Bent was like other charwomen ; but in all that pertained to her sister, she was tender and emotional to an extraordinary degree. I made inquiries about them without eliciting much information. They had

lived in Star Court for nearly three years, but Rebecca alone was known to their fellow-lodgers. Her sister had been always a recluse, if not an invalid; she had never left the room; it was understood that she took in needlework, when she could obtain employment, which was not often; but Rebecca was the bread-winner. She toiled early and late, but no one had heard a word of complaint from her. As a general rule it is not the hardworkers that complain. It is not that they are resigned to their harsh fate, whatever cant may have to say about it; it is not in human nature to be that; but there is often a certain grim reticence about them; a not unjustifiable resentment.

This was not the case with Rebecca, however. She had her reasons (as I afterwards discovered) for liking work for its own sake. Work preserves us from thinking. She was quiet in her ways, and kept herself *to* herself; but she had a temper of her own. A neigh-

bour once condoled with her on having a sick sister to keep. "She didn't seem to help much; couldn't she put her own shoulder to the wheel a little more? There didn't seem so very much the matter with her," and so on. Then Rebecca broke out, and exhibited quite an unexpected command of language. She impressed upon that neighbour the desirability of minding her own business in such convincing terms that nobody ever ventured to sympathize with her upon the labour question again. But she had not been popular before, and this ebullition set society against her. She was for the future very severely let alone.

Gaunt and grim though she was, for my part, strange to say, Rebecca interested me, at least as much as my patient, notwithstanding her many advantages. Her beauty was of the kind that is heightened rather than otherwise by delicacy of constitution; even disease only rendered it more exquisite. It reminded me

of the lily of the vale, "whom youth makes so fair, and passion so frail, that the light of its tremulous bells is seen through their pavilions of tender green," so transparent was its splendour. That she was dying I had now no doubt, nor could the end be far distant. The spectacle was very touching, even to a professional eye ; but what, I confess, lessened my sympathy for her was her conduct towards Rebecca. She seemed to take everything she did for her as a matter of course. It was quite true that she gave one the impression of belonging to quite another and a higher sphere of being ; but to see her so self-conscious of it was deplorable. If she had been a princess she could hardly have been served, not only with more devotion, but with more respectful reverence. I noticed in particular that, though Rebecca lavished every term of endearment upon her sister, she never addressed her by her Christian name, and I only discovered it to be Lucy by direct inquiry.

With the selfish egotism of the habitual invalid every doctor is familiar ; but with Lucy Bent it was carried beyond all bounds. I had supplied her with various little luxuries, and made arrangements by which, during her illness, her sister should not be under the necessity of leaving her ; and for this she expressed herself—though, I have reason to believe, only at Rebecca's prompting—in a few sufficiently suitable words ; if she had not uttered them I should have thought little of it. There was not much graciousness in Star Court, though, in this case, where the casket was so fair, one naturally looked for the jewel ; but the ignoring of her sister's claim to gratitude, and the coldness—as it seemed to me, the studied coldness—of her manner towards her was painful to witness. She never exchanged a word with her that was not absolutely necessary. Her state was such that it was impossible to remonstrate with her upon that or any other

subject ; indeed—and, so far, this was an excuse for her—she was so wrapt in her own wretchedness, so given over to, I know not what of regretful and despairing memories, that she seemed to pay no attention even to her own condition, to “the body that did her such grievous wrong,” or to the soul that was about to quit it.

Rebecca, on her side, was equally silent ; dumb as the dog who, treated with indifference by some morose master, still waits on and watches him with patient devotion, but it was easy to see how she longed for a kind word, or even a loving glance ; and longed in vain. At last, when the end was very near, I could forbear no longer ; it was a clergyman's business, perhaps, more than mine, but my patient had declined—and with no little vehemence for one so weak—to see a clergyman ; and I took my courage (for, strange as it may seem, it needed courage) in both hands, and spoke to her.



"HAVE YOU NOT ONE WORD, EVEN OF FAREWELL, LUCY?"

"Have you not one word, even of farewell, Lucy, for the sister who has nursed you so tenderly?"

There was a struggle within the panting bosom, added to the fight for breath, but the lips moved, and what they formed was the monosyllable "No;" in the faint sound I recognized a distant touch of bitterness.

"I know not what you have suffered," I went on, "and it may be" (this struck me for the first time) "even at her hands; but I know what *she* has suffered, and is suffering now for your sake. Forgive her, if she has done you wrong, as you yourself hope to be forgiven. Look at her, it may be for the last time, and bid her kiss you."

Into the dying eyes, as she turned them on her sister, there came a look of ineffable sweetness; and she feebly stretched her arms towards her in invitation of an embrace.

Rebecca fell on her knees beside the wretched

bed with a cry in which, for the moment, sorrow seemed to have been swallowed up in joy. To have been the witness of what followed would have been a sacrilege, and I left them together.

It may have been their first and last caress, for when I entered the room the next morning it had but one living tenant. The dead girl lay on the bed with her hands crossed "as if praying dumbly over her breast." The words of the poet occurred to me as I looked at her, but it was that line alone which had any application to her case. That she had not fallen, whatever sin she had committed (though she looked an angel), as Hood's unfortunate had done, I felt certain. Her story was no common one of the street and the river. Everything that loving hands could do had been done for her, to the very last service.

Rebecca was wonderfully calm and resigned, and after a few words of sympathy which, perhaps, had better not have been said, for I

could see they tried her firmness, I spoke of what was necessary. Of course I took upon myself all the arrangements of the funeral, but I had to ask her one question about the death-certificate.

"I do not know your sister's married name," I said.

"She was never married," was the unexpected reply.

My eye wandered interrogatively to the wedding-ring upon that delicate finger on which the needle had left no trace. It had, indeed, done little work of any kind, but Rebecca only shook her head.

"Then I will give your sister's maiden name—Bent."

"She was not my sister, sir; she was no relative at all. Put Lester."

"No relative? Then, indeed, Rebecca, you may say you have done your duty to your neighbour."

“My duty!” she answered with bitter scorn; and throwing up her great hands. “It was I who murdered her.”

It was not till some days afterwards, when Lucy had been laid to rest in the cemetery, that I heard from Rebecca what she believed to be the story of her crime. It was exaggerated, emotional, and, I am very sure, represented the case only as it appeared to a mind full of remorse and self-reproach.

I prefer, for truth's sake as well as hers, to give the facts as they would have struck an unprejudiced observer.

Lucy Lester was the daughter of a tradesman, well to do, and who had made his money honestly enough; but he was a puritan, and of the strictest sect of the Pharisees. His wife had died when Lucy was still a child, and she was brought up in an atmosphere of gloom and dulness, very unsuited to her character, which was at once frivolous and egotistic. Her beauty,

of which she was only too conscious, was pronounced by the formal society with which she mixed, to be a snare (as indeed it proved to be), and every amusement to which she was naturally inclined was sternly forbidden to her. Rebecca, who had been her nurse, and when she grew up become her maid, sympathized with her young mistress, to whom she was also genuinely attached, and made common cause with her against her persecutors, as she called them, though those included her parent himself. He was very thrifty, and kept Lucy "short" as to pin-money, and Rebecca, who, as she told me (for she spared herself in nothing), "was very greedy of gain," on a very low scale of wages. It was a sad and rather sordid story of severity and repression met by duplicity and intrigue. What redeemed it was the disinterested though exaggerated fealty of Rebecca, which would have borne comparison with that of feudal times. Except for her singular beauty there

was nothing admirable in Lucy, who indeed was proud, selfish, and exacting, but in Rebecca's eyes she was perfection, and a martyr ; fit for a prince, but with no choice of suitors, save of a commonplace and unworthy kind, who never having seen a stage play had no notion of the desirability of making a friend of the maid of their mistress.

Presently, however, a lover appeared of quite another stamp, but unhappily a clandestine lover. Mr. Power was one of her father's customers, a gentleman, as was understood, of good position, who at all events gave large orders which were punctually paid for, and while calling on Mr. Lester on business he chanced to catch sight of Lucy, and became at once enamoured of her beauty. Without the simplicity which is the safeguard of her sex, she was absolutely ignorant of that world with which she panted to mingle ; the man's air of fashion made as much way with her as his protestations ; and unfor-

tunately the lavishness which a man of his stamp displays, when bent on such a design, was taken by Rebecca as a sign of a generous nature ; without knowing them (as I think) to be exactly bribes, she took his bribes.

With one word to her master she could probably have saved his daughter, but she did not feel she was in danger. Even a word of warning to Lucy herself might not have been thrown away, but she did not give it. On the contrary, urged by many considerations, dislike of her master and his surroundings, willingness to please her darling, and confidence in Power's professions, she assisted him to elope with her. I am afraid there was even a time when Lucy shrank from the audacity of that design, and but for Rebecca would have abandoned it ; but it was because she was herself deceived. Indeed, at the last, when Lucy had lost her head as well as her heart, and would have risked all for love, Rebecca stepped in, and insisted upon

being present at the marriage ceremony. It was a barren precaution—though poor Lucy might afterwards have used it as a weapon of revenge, if she had had the heart for revenge—for in a few weeks she discovered that he whom she had believed to be her husband was a married man. In that brief space she had lost all; fortune, friends, and home; for her father closed his doors against her; and the unhappy girl found herself thrown on her own resources, which consisted only of a scanty wardrobe and a few jewels. Then, like a wounded tigress, she turned upon Rebecca, with “It is you who have been my ruin.”

The fury that might reasonably have been poured on her deceiver seemed quenched in the very catastrophe he had caused, as flame deserts the blackened ruin; so far as he was concerned the crime of which she had been the victim was so overwhelming that in place of indignation she felt only wretchedness and despair; too

weak to seek relief in self-destruction, she yet desired to hide herself from her fellow-creatures, and especially to be seen no more of men.

What remained to her of vitality took the form of passionate reproach of her late ally and assistant, and not a word did Rebecca say in her own defence.

Instead of leaving her young mistress to a fate only too easy to be foreseen, she devoted herself with penitence and remorse to smooth the rough road she must needs travel for the future.

Effort of her own Lucy never made, and accepted the other's services not only as her due, but as but a small instalment of the obligation she had incurred in having given her such bad advice. That she had not forgiven her she made very plain, even (as has been shown) up to the last moment of her life; but Rebecca never thought herself hardly used.

"There was nothing I could do, as you may

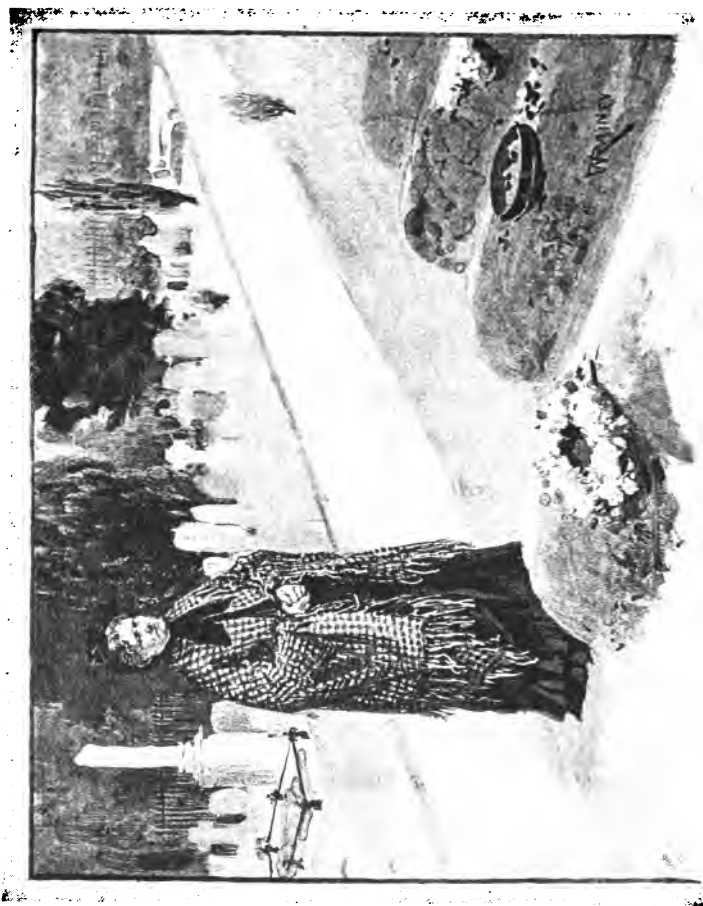
believe," she said, "that deserved thanks. It was owing to me that my poor dear mistress, so young, so beautiful, so tender, had fallen into the hands of a villain, and unfit as she was to bear hardships, was compelled to live upon a crust. Was it to my credit that these hands which had taken his bribes, provided the crust?"

If Miss Lucy had complained, she said she could have better borne the consciousness of her crime; but, after that first outbreak, she kept silence, a cold reproachful silence that for years had chilled the other's very heart. All she stipulated for was to be alone, not to be spoken to, not to be seen, and, even when her illness had become severe, it was only on Rebecca's promise to obtain professional advice without the doctor's presence that the sick girl had permitted her to apply to me.

This was the story of Rebecca's remorse.

I did what I could to reason with the poor





LUCY LESTER'S GRAVE.

woman, by pointing out how penance atones for wrong ; but if I had not been so fortunate as to obtain for her Lucy's death-bed forgiveness, she would certainly never have forgiven *herself*. As it was, she was in some degree comforted. I got her a situation in the country with some friends of mine, where she was greatly esteemed, and remained for years. She always took a day or two's holiday in the summer. No one knew where she spent it, for she had no friends ; but at the same time, who ever visited a certain East End cemetery would have found, on Lucy Lester's grave, fresh flowers.

IS IT A MAN?

By J. M. BARRIE.



J. M. BARRIE.

I.

I CAME upon his grave accidentally a few weeks ago while taking a short cut through the cemetery of an unlovely provincial town. His name I had forgotten the night I heard it years ago; had flung it away, so to speak, with the handbills he gave me at the same time, but the wording on the tombstone recalled his story to me as vividly as if it was a long lost friend



"HE SAT UP EXCITEDLY IN HIS SEAT, RUBBED HIS HANDS NERVOUSLY ON HIS TROUSERS, AND PEERED,
NOT AT THE STAGE, BUT AT THE WINGS."

whom I had suddenly struck against. I laughed at the story when he told it to me, but when I read it in brief on the tombstone I wondered why I had laughed.

We only met once, and it was in London at the theatre. His stall adjoined mine. When his lips were at rest he was a melancholy looking little man, but frequently he spoke to himself, and then all character went out of his face. For a time he paid no attention to the acting, but by-and-by he sat up excitedly in his seat, rubbed his hands nervously on his trousers, and leaning in my direction, peered, not at the stage, but at the wings. I heard him mutter, "Her cue in a moment, and I don't see her!" He looked around the house as if to signal to everybody that something was about to happen, and then I noticed his feet begin to beat the floor instinctively, and his one palm run to the other. Next moment the heavy father whispered to the old, and there-

fore comic spinster, "But not a word of this to my daughter; here she comes."

The heroine of the piece sailed on to the stage, with tears for her father and smiles for the audience, and, as I thought, one quick glance for my neighbour. His feet pattered softly on the floor, as a sign to the audience to cheer, but they were reluctant, and after she had given them an imploring glance, she began to speak slowly, as one saying to herself between her spoken words, "I am still quite willing to stop if you will applaud me." And she was applauded, for my neighbour's feet at last set others a-going, and then she curtsied and waited for more, and then we all became energetic. The little man had been breathing quick in his excitement, but now he heaved a great sigh of relief, and whispered to me in exultation, "What a reception the O'Reilly has got, sir, and quite spontaneous. The same thing occurs every night, every night,

every night! Hush! you will see acting now."

He had silenced me when I was about to ask him if he was here every night. I judged him an ardent admirer of Miss O'Reilly, and had further evidence during the first act that one man may lead the applause as a conductor leads the orchestra. When Miss Helmsley entered, and some pittites began to cheer, my neighbour cried "Sh-sh" so fiercely that the demonstration stopped abruptly, and Miss Helmsley withdrew her curtsy. When the heavy father stopped in the middle of his long speech for a "hand" to help him on his way, he would have got it but for the "Sh-sh" of the little man. When the comedian nudged the elderly spinster in the ribs, which is how elderly spinsters are made love to on the stage, some ladies giggled, but my neighbour looked at them with a face that said, "There is nothing funny in that," and they restrained their mirth.

But when Miss O'Reilly snatched the smoking-cap from Leonard and put it on her own flaxen head, he chuckled till the whole audience admitted the fun of it, and when Miss O'Reilly told Lord John to stand back and let her pass, my neighbour brought down the house; and when she made her reluctant exit he brought down the house again; and when the curtain fell on the first act he shouted "O'Reilly" until we were all infected. Not until he had her before the curtain would he retire, and then it was to speak about her to me. The exchange of a vesta introduced us to each other.

"You have seen the piece before?" I asked, with the good-nature that is born of a cigarette. I had already sufficient interest in him to wonder who he was.

"The piece?" he echoed indifferently. "Oh yes; I have seen the greater part of it frequently."

"How does it end?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know," he answered contemptuously.

"I always walk out of the house just before the last tableau."

"Is Miss O'Reilly not on the stage in that tableau?" I asked.

"She is not," he replied, rapping out an oath or two, and trembling with rage. "Did you ever hear of anything so monstrous? She is leading lady, the idol of the town, and yet she is not on at the end. Excuse me, sir. I am always taken in this way when I think of it."

He bit his cigarette in two and asked for another vesta. Then he explained.

"She dies, you know, in the middle of the act."

"Ah, that accounts for it," I said.

"Not at all," he retorted; "she ought not to die until the tableau. And if she had to die then, that should have been the tableau. What do people come to the theatre to see?"

"The play," I suggested.

"Pooh, the play!" he sneered. "There are twenty plays to be seen nightly at West End theatres, but only one O'Reilly. They come to see the O'Reilly, sir, and it is defrauding the public to let her die a moment before the end."

"Still," I said, "the author——"

"Pshaw!" he broke in, "who thinks of the author? He could easily have brought down the curtain on the O'Reilly's death, and I am confident he meant to do it. But Helmsley is the management's niece, and insisted on being the only lady in the tableau. You noticed that Helmsley was a complete frost? I distinctly heard some one hissing her."

"So did I," I said, smiling, for the some one had been himself.

"You heard it too," he cried audaciously. "Thank you, sir," he said, and shook me warmly by the hand.

"The O'Reilly herself," he added, "had no

wish to be in the tableau, but she knew the public would expect it. She is a woman, that, sir."

"She is," I agreed.

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "You, too, were struck by it? But she impresses every one in the same way. The management pay her a princely salary; but she is worth it. Did you hear how that man in the pit laughed over her lines about bread and cheese and kisses? I wonder who he is?"

"What salary does she get?" I asked, with the curiosity of a theatre-goer.

"They say," he replied, looking at me sharply, "that she gets eighty pounds a week."

"Hem!" I said.

He coughed. "What a carriage she has!" he exclaimed; and then waited for me to agree.

"Wonderful!" I said, for I never contradict a man who is in love.

"You think she has a wonderful carriage?"

he asked, as if I had put the idea into his head.

"Yes, you are quite right. I will tell her you remarked on it."

"You know her personally?"

"I have that honour," he replied with dignity. "Candidly now, is not her education superb?"

"It is," I said.

"I agree with you," he answered, "and you have used the one word that properly describes it. Superb! Yes, that is the very word. I will tell her you said superb. I see you know acting, sir, when you see it. Not that I would call it acting. Would you call it acting?"

"Certainly not," I answered recklessly, but hoping he would not ask me to give it a name.

"No," he said, "it is not acting. It is simply genius."

"Genius," I said from memory, "is all the talents in a nutshell."

"Ha!" he cried, "that is how you would

describe her? All the talents in a nutshell! What a capital line for the advertisements. All the talents in a nutshell! I will tell her you said that about her."

He lowered his voice. "Press?" he asked with some awe. I shook my head.

"Got friends on the press?" he next inquired.

"Yes," I said, remembering that a pressman owed me five pounds.

"Critics?"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"Then," he said eagerly, "put them up to that line, 'all the talents in a nutshell.' Or stop; would you mind giving me their private address?"

"Unfortunately, I cannot."

"That is a pity, because if you could see your way to a 'par,' I think I might be able to introduce you to the O'Reilly. But she is very particular."

"You are an enthusiast about her," I remarked.

"Who could help it?" he answered. "I have watched her career since she was—on my soul, sir, since she was nobody in particular. There was a time when that woman was no more famous than you are. You were speaking of her genius a minute ago, but, would you believe it, she rose from the ranks, positively from the ranks."

If I had swooned at this, his hands would have been ready to catch me; but I kept my senses.

"Your interest in her," I ventured to say, "was very natural, but it must have taken up a good deal of your time."

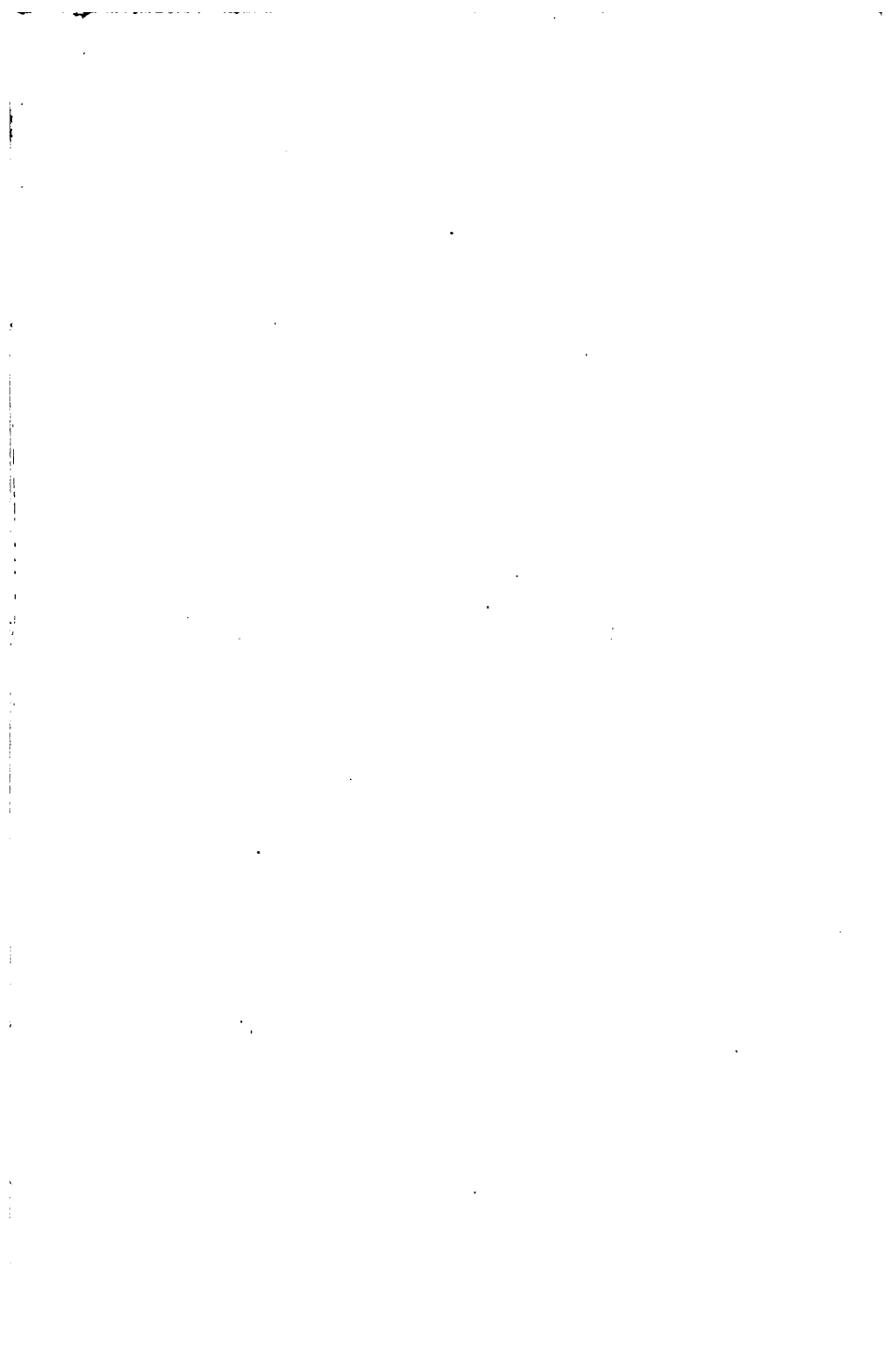
"All my time," he said.

"Except during business hours, of course."

"From the time I rise until midnight."

"Then you have no profession?"

"That is my profession."





"I USED TO BE IN THE PROFESSION MYSELF," HE SAID, SIGHING. "I AM JOLLY
LITTLE JIM!"

"What?"

"The interest I take in her."

"And did you never do anything else?" I asked, beginning to envy the little man his father.

At once the melancholy look, of which I have spoken, came back to his face.

"I used to be in the profession myself," he said, sighing. "I am Jolly Little Jim."

He did not look it at that moment.

"You have forgotten me, I see," he said, dolefully. "Think a moment. Jolly Little Jim was the name."

"I am afraid I never heard it," I had to admit.

"Nonsense!" he answered testily. "Everybody knew that name once. I got no other, though my real name is James Thorpe. Why, I advertised as Jolly Little Jim. You *must* have heard it."

"Perhaps I have," I replied, pitying his distress.

"If you would care to read my press notices," he began putting his hand into his pocket, "I can——"

"Not to-night," I interposed hurriedly.

"I can repeat most of them," he said brightly.

"Rather tell me why you gave up a profession," I said, "which you doubtless adorned."

"Thank you," he answered, again pressing my hand. "Well, sir, the O'Reilly has the responsibility for that."

"You gave up acting because it interfered with your interest in her?"

"You may put it in that way. I gave up everything for her. If that woman, sir, had asked me to choose between her and my press notices, I believe I would have burned them."

"How has she rewarded you?" I asked, seeing that he was of a communicative nature.

"She married me," he answered, drawing himself up to his full height. "Yes, I am her husband!"

It was I who shook his hand this time. I could think of nothing else to do. He was beginning his story, when the bell tinkled, warning us to return to our seats.

"She is on immediately," he said, "so we must go back and give her a hand. I'll meet you here again after the second act."

II.

DURING the second act Mr. Thorpe behaved as previously, drinking in Miss O'Reilly's every word, cheering her comings and goings, and yawning, and even reading a newspaper, when he should have been listening to Miss Helmsley. Once I saw him make a note on his programme, and felt sure it was, "All the talents in a nutshell." I started him on his story as soon as he joined me in the smoking-room. (He had remained in his seat to shout "O'Reilly.")

"The first time I ever set eyes on her," he

began, "was at Dublin, where we had both been engaged for pantomime. Yes, that woman once played in pantomime; and, what is more, she was only second girl. That is a strange thing to think of. I was the first villain, Deepdyeo, and the *Shamrock* said of my creation, 'Another part admirably rendered is the Deepdyeo of Mr. James Thorpe, better known to fame as Jolly Little Jim. Mr. Thorpe, who was received with an ovation——'"

"But you were to tell me of Miss O'Reilly," I reminded him.

"Ah," he said, "I shall never forget that first meeting. It took place at rehearsal, and when I left the theatre that afternoon I was a changed man."

"You fell in love with her at first sight?"

"Not absolutely at first sight. You see, I was introduced to her before the rehearsal began, and there was no opportunity of falling in love with her then."

"Still, she had impressed you?"

"How could she impress me before I had seen her do anything? What is it in a woman that one falls in love with?"

"Who can tell?" I said.

"Anybody can tell," he answered, putting me down for a bachelor. "It is the genius in her, or rather what we consider genius, for many men make a mistake about that."

"So you loved her for her genius?"

"What first struck me was her exit. I suppose I may say that I fell in love with it at once. Then she sang; only a verse, but it was enough. Later she danced, and that, sir, was a revelation. I knew the woman was a genius. By the time the pantomime was in full swing, she was the one woman in the world for me."

"And she had fallen in love with your genius, too?"

"I could not be certain. You see, we

were not on speaking terms; she was so jealous."

"But that," I said, "is recognized as a sign of love. No doubt, she wanted you entirely to herself. Who was the lady?"

"What lady?" he asked, in surprise.

"The lady Miss O'Reilly was jealous of," I said.

"I never said she was jealous of a lady; though, of course, she would be jealous of the principal girl. I spoke of myself."

"But how," I questioned, "could she be jealous unless she thought you were paying attention to some other woman?"

"Oh!" he said, with slow enlightenment, "I see what you mean, but you don't see what I mean. It was of me that she was jealous, or rather of my song. You may not be aware that in pantomime we are allowed to choose our own songs. Well, it so happened that she and I both wanted to sing the same song. It

was an exquisite thing, called, 'Do you think when you wink?' and as I had applied for permission to sing it first she was told to select something else. That was why we did not speak."

"But if you loved her," I said, speaking, it is true, on a subject of which I knew little, "you would surely have consented to waive your rights to the song. Love, it is said, delights in self-sacrifice."

"No doubt," he admitted, "but you know the lines, 'I could not love you, dear, so much, loved I not honour more.' Well, my honour was at stake, for I had promised my admirers in Dublin — and they were legion (see the *Shamrock* for January 12, 1883)—to sing that song. And my fame was at stake as well as my honour, for I created quite a furore with 'Do you think when you wink?'"

"Still," I insisted, "love is all powerful."

"I admit it," he answered, "and, what is

more, I proved it, for after I had sung the song a week, I transferred it to her."

"Did she sing it as well as you had done?"

There was a mighty struggle within him before he could reply, but when he did speak he was magnificent.

"She sang it far better than I," he said firmly, and then winced.

"It was a great sacrifice you made," I said gently, "but doubtless it had its reward. Did she give you her hand in exchange for the song?"

"No," he answered, "we were not married until a year after that. She was grateful to me, but soon we quarrelled again. The fact is that I took a 'call' which she insisted was meant for her. She felt that disappointment terribly; indeed, she has not got over it yet. She cannot speak about it without crying."

"You mean," I said, "that you years ago deprived her of the privilege of curtseying to

an audience? Surely she would not let that prey on her mind?"

"You don't understand," he replied, "that fame is food and drink to an artist. It was months before she forgave me that, though she is naturally the most tender-hearted creature. Our baggage man stole fifty pounds from her, and she would not prosecute him because she knew his sister. But you see it was not money that I deprived her of—it was fame."

"And did you win your way back into her favour?" I asked, "by letting her take a 'call' that was meant for you?"

"No," he said; "several times I determined to do so, but when the moment came I could not make the sacrifice. I spent about half my salary in presents to her; but, although she took them, she refused to listen to any proposal of marriage. By this time I had confessed my love for her. Well, we parted, and soon afterwards I got an engagement as chief

comedian in the 'Powder Monkey' Company, which was then on tour. She was playing chambermaid in it. Fancy that woman flinging herself away on chambermaids! I made a big hit in my part. The *Lincoln Observer* said, 'Mr. James Thorpe, the celebrated Jolly Little Jim, created a——'"

"But about Miss O'Reilly," I asked.

"We got on swimmingly at first," he said.

"She had decided to forgive you?"

"No, she was stiff the first day, but I put her up to a bit of business, that used to be encored nightly, and then she accepted my offer of marriage. But a week after I had given her the engagement-ring she returned it to me. I don't blame her."

"You admit that she had just cause of complaint against you?"

"Yes; no woman who was an artist could have stood it. The fact is, that one night I took the 'up' side of her in our comic love

scene. That is to say, I had my face to the audience, and so she was forced to turn her back to them. I had no right to do it, but a sort of madness came over me, and I yielded to the impulse. As soon as we had made our exits she flung the ring in my—ah, she gave me back the ring, and, for the remainder of the tour, she was not civil to me. The tour ended abruptly; indeed, the manager decamped, owing us all a fortnight's salary, and we were stranded in Bootle without money to pay for our lodgings, not to speak of our tickets back to London. I pawned my watch and sold my fur coat, and shared what I got for them with her."

"And so the engagement was resumed?"

"No, no; that was merely a friendly act, and it was accepted as such. The engagement was not resumed until I got a 'par' about her into a Sunday paper. But that is the bell again. I'll tell you the rest after her death scene."

III.

MISS O'REILLY died as slowly as the management would allow her, and, when she had gasped her last gasp with her hair down, Jolly Little Jim that was led the tears and the cheers, cried out, "Superb, by Jove! that woman has all the talents in a nut-shell," and strutted from the stalls in a manner that invited the rest of the audience to follow. But everybody, save Mr. Thorpe and myself, remained to see the comic man produce the missing will, and so my little friend and I got the smoking-room to ourselves.

"The next time we were on tour together," he continued, after I had given the death scene a testimonial, "was in 'Letters of Fire,' with a real steam-engine. I was Bill Rody, the returned convict, and the *Rochester Age* said, 'Mr. Thorpe, who, as Jolly Little Jim, made such a——'"

"The engagement was resumed by this time?" I asked.

"I told you the 'par' had done that. However, we had another tiff during rehearsals, because I got the epilogue to speak. I dare say that would have led to a rupture had not——"

"Had not she loved you so deeply," I suggested.

"She loved me fondly," he replied, "but she loved fame more. Every true genius does. No, the reason she did not break with me then was that I was 'on' in her great scene in the fourth act. You see, as chief comedian I had a right to a little comic by-play in that scene, and if I had exercised that right I should have drawn away attention from herself. Thus I had the whip hand of her. I am inclined to think that had I pressed the point I could have married her during the run of that piece."

"By threatening, if she delayed the wedding,

to introduce comic business into her great scene?"

"Yes; but I did not, and you are no doubt wondering why. The fact is, I thought my self-denial would soften her heart and so bring about the results I was pining for. Perhaps it would have done so, but unfortunately, 'Letters of Fire' did not draw (though a great success artistically), and we had to put 'London Slums' on in its place. In that piece the leading juvenile played up to her so well that she began to neglect me. I was in despair, and so not quite accountable for my actions. Nevertheless, you will think the revenge I took as cold-blooded as it seemed to her. You must understand that, though our pieces were splendidly billed, the O'Reilly had fifty chromos of herself, done at her own expense, and all framed. These she got our agent in advance to exhibit in the best places in the best shops, and undoubtedly they added to her fame. They

preceded us by a week, and so she was always well known before we opened anywhere. Well, sir, I got fifty chromos of myself framed, and ten days before we were due at Sheffield I had them put into fifty barbers' shops there."

"Why barbers' shops?" I interposed.

"Because they are most seen and discussed there," he explained. "It comes natural to a man when he is being shaved to talk about what is on at the theatres. I can't say why that is so, but so it is. Perhaps one reason is that barbers are nearly always enthusiasts on matters of art. Well, if there is a good chromo in the shop, of course it comes in for its share of discussion, and the barber tells what parts you have played before, and so on. It is a great help. However, the O'Reilly no sooner heard what I had done than she told me all was over between us."

"Still," I said, "the barbers would have had room for her pictures as well as for yours."

"I got the best places," he answered; "and there is this, too, to consider. The more chromos there are to look at, the less attention does any particular one get; and she held that if I loved her truly I would not have stepped in, as it were, between her and the public. She did not get a reception that opening night at Sheffield, and, of course, she gave me the blame. It seriously affected her health."

"But you made that quarrel up?"

"Not for three weeks. Then she gave in. Instead of my going to her, she came to me and offered to renew the engagement if I would withdraw my chromos."

"Which you did gladly, of course?"

"I took a night to think of it. You who are not an artist cannot conceive how I loved my chromos. Did I tell you that I had printed beneath them, 'Yours very sincerely, Jolly Little Jim'? However, I did yield to her wishes, and we were to be married at Newcastle,

when a terrible thing happened. We have now come to the turning-point of my life. At Newcastle, sir, I made my last appearance on the stage."

Mr. Thorpe turned his face from me until he recovered command of it. Then he resumed.

"Two days before the marriage was to take place a Newcastle paper slated her and praised me. It said, 'Miss O'Reilly ought to take a page out of Mr. Thorpe's book. She should learn from him that the action should suit the word, not precede it. She should note his facial expression, which is comedy in picture, and control her own tendency to let her face look after itself. She should take note of his clear pronunciation and model her somewhat snappy delivery on it.' Sir, I read that notice with mixed feelings. As an artist I could not but delight in its complimentary references to myself, but as a lover I dreaded its effect on the O'Reilly. After breakfast I went to call on

her at her lodgings, and happening to pass a number of news-shops on the way, I could not resist the temptation to buy at each a paper with the notice. I concealed the papers about my person, and as I approached her door I tried to look downcast. But I fear my step was springy. Perhaps she saw me from her window. At all events, her landlady informed me that Miss O'Reilly declined to see me. 'Here is something I was told to give you,' said the woman, handing me a pill-box. It contained the ring! I compelled the O'Reilly to listen to me that night at the theatre, and she allowed that I was not to blame for the notice. But she pointed out that there could be no chance of happiness for a husband and wife whose interests were opposed, and I saw that it was true. I walked about the streets of Newcastle all that night, such was my misery, such the struggle in my breast between love and fame. Well, sir, love conquered, as it

never could have conquered her, for she was a great artist, and I only a small one, though the *Basingstoke Magpie* said of me, 'The irresistibly droll Mr. Thorpe, better known as——' "

"The play will end in a minute," I said.
"How did you win her?"

"I offered," he replied, with emotion, "to give up my profession and devote myself to furthering her fame."

"And to live on her?" I said aghast.

"You who do not understand art may put it in that way," he replied; "but she realized the sacrifice I was making for her sake, and doubted my love no longer. Was it nothing, sir, to give up my fame, to give up the name I was known by all over England (as the *Torquay Chat* said), and sink to the level of those who have never been mentioned in the papers? Why, you yourself had forgotten the famous Jolly Little Jim."

His voice was inexpressibly mournful, and

I felt that I really had been listening to a love romance. The last three hours, too, had shown me that Mr. Thorpe was responsible for some of the fame of his wife.

"The management," he went on bravely, "allowed me to retire without the usual fortnight's notice, and so the marriage took place on the day we had previously arranged it for."

"Had you a pleasant honeymoon?" I asked.

"In one sense," he replied, "we had no honeymoon, for she played that night as usual; but in another sense it has been a honeymoon ever since, for we have the same interests, the same joys, the same sorrows."

"That is to say, you have both only her fame to think of now? May I ask, did she, for whom you made such a sacrifice, make any sacrifice for you?"

"She did indeed," he answered. "For four

weeks she let her name be printed in the bills thus: 'Miss O'Reilly (Mrs. James Thorpe),' though to have it known by the public that she is married is against an actress."

"And you are happy in your new occupation?"

"Very happy," he answered cheerfully, "and very proud." Then with a heavy sigh he added, "But I wish people would remember Jolly Little Jim."

There was really something pathetic about the man; but before I could tell a lie and say that I now remembered Jolly Little Jim perfectly, the audience began to applaud, and Mr. Thorpe, thrusting some bills into my hands, hurried back to the stalls to shout "O'Reilly."

As I have said, I never met him again, nor thought of him, until I found myself at his grave. This is the inscription on the tombstone:

ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF
JAMES THORPE,
AGED 38,
BY HIS SORROWING WIFE,
THE FAMOUS MAY O'REILLY
(Of the principal theatres).

Poor Mr. Thorpe! There was something lovable about him. The O'Reilly might have put on the tombstone: "Better known as Jolly Little Jim." It would have gratified him.

THE GOLDEN RULE.

BY MRS. OLIPHANT.



I.

THE breakfast-room in the vicarage at Leighton-Furness was one of the most cheerful rooms you can imagine, especially at the hour and the meal to which it was devoted. It got all the morning sun, and on a warm morning in May, when the lilacs with which the lawn was surrounded were in full bloom, and the pretty breakfast-table was adorned—as all tables are nowadays—with the flowers of the season, wallflowers golden and brown, with the dew still on them freshly gathered, making a glow of colour among the white china, and filling the room with fragrance, you could not

have seen a pleasanter place. And the family gathered round the table was in every way suited to the place. First, the vicar, sixty, hale and hearty, with white hair, which was exceedingly becoming to him, and a fine country colour speaking of fresh air and much exercise. Second, his wife, Mrs. Wynyard, ten years younger, very well preserved, who had been a handsome woman in her day; and third, Emily, not, perhaps, to be described in these words, but yet a young woman whose looks were not to be despised, and who would have been an important member of any household in which she had found herself. It was a special providence, Mrs. Wynyard believed, all things considered, that up to this moment her father's house had pleased her more than any other, and that no suitor had carried her away.

For it need scarcely be said that in this pleasant house everything was not pleasant. Had all been well with them the historian

would have had nothing to tell ; from whence, no doubt, comes the saying, whether appropriated to countries or to wives, that those are the happiest of whom there is nothing to be said. The post had come in just before the moment at which this episode in their lives opens, and the ladies, as was natural, had thrown themselves upon their letters. The vicar, for his part, had opened his newspaper, which is the natural division—I do not say of labour—in the circumstances. For at sixty a man, and especially a clergyman, gets a little indifferent about his correspondence, which is generally more a trouble than a pleasure ; whereas a woman's interest in her letters, even when they are about nothing in particular, never fails.

This morning, however, there was some special interest which made even the vicar's absorption in his newspaper a little fictitious. When Mrs. Wynyard and her daughter took

up the letters, they both in one breath exclaimed "Jack!" throwing aside the other items of their correspondence as if they mattered less than nothing. When he heard that exclamation the vicar looked up from his paper and said, "Well?" sharply, looking from one to another; but receiving no reply after a moment's interval returned, or seemed to return, to his reading. He knew by long experience that Jack's letters generally meant some scrape or other, and he was relieved when he got no answer; but still, I think, his newspaper for the moment was more or less a pretence.

Jack was not a son appropriate to a vicarage: he was not of the kind of those who are their father's favourite and their mother's joy. How it is that this comes to pass, who can tell? With everything to lead him to do well, every tradition and habit of life in his favour, he had not done well. He should have been ready to

step into the vicarage in his father's place, for it was a sort of family living, securing many good things to the fortunate inheritor. But it was soon found that this was out of the question; not in the way which is most respectable and even superior nowadays, entitling a young man to the interest and admiration of everybody — that of religious doubts and scruples—but in a more vulgar way, which secures nobody's interest. He had not managed even to take his degree; he had done nothing that he ought to have done: and, instead of being in orders or at the bar, or a fellow of his college, all which would have been things reasonable and to be expected, he was in a merchant's office in London, sadly against his will, and against all the prepossessions of his family. But what was he, then, to do? Jack had nothing to suggest: what he would have liked would have been to do nothing at all, but, failing that, he did not mind what it was. It

was considered a great piece of luck when his father's old friend, Mr. Bullock, took him into his office at an age when young men are not generally taken into offices, and for a time it was supposed that Jack was going to do very well. But in an evil hour Mr. Bullock sent him on a commercial mission to America, in which Jack was not successful—perhaps because he thought a voyage like that was chiefly a frolic; perhaps for other causes. He had not been successful, but yet, when he returned home (considerably after the time at which he ought to have returned home) he was not dismissed because of his employer's affection for his father. Mr. Bullock, however, took an opportunity of telling the vicar privately that Jack would not do anything in business.

“He may make his own living as a poor clerk,” the merchant said, “which is a dreary thing to look forward to. I gave him a chance, but he hasn't taken it. I felt it my duty to tell

you, Wynyard : if you can find anything else for him where he may do better, don't hesitate to take him away."

The vicar knew very well this meant that his commercial friend would be glad to get rid of Jack, but he did not take the hint.

"It is always something that he should be making his living," he said, and Mr. Bullock was too great a friend of the Wynyards to send their boy away.

But Jack got on worse than ever after that unsuccessful attempt. As for making his living, his mother knew how many little things there were to be made up. It was a knowledge which the ladies of the family kept as far as they could from his father. But when he got into any bad scrape this was not possible, so that all the members of the family were a little afraid, as well as eager, to see what was in Jack's letters when they came. They did not come very often, and two in one day was a

thing which probably had never happened before: the scrape must be graver than usual to warrant such an effort on his part, they all thought. Each of the recipients gave a little gasp on opening her special communication, but neither said anything, which at first was an ease to the vicar's mind. But the letters were long (another wonder), and after a while he became impatient. When Emily had reached the fourth page of hers, which her father saw, in some miraculous way, through the *Times*, he put down his paper altogether and again said, "Well?" in a still sharper tone.

"Oh, papa! the most wonderful news," Emily said.

"Well?" cried Mrs. Wynyard, not to be behind, "I can't tell you if it is well or not, but it is something, at least, that I never thought I should live to see."

"It may be the making of him, mother," cried Emily.



"OH, PAPA! THE MOST WONDERFUL NEWS," EMILY SAID.

“Or his ruin,” Mrs. Wynyard said.

“What is it,” cried the vicar, bringing down his fist on the table, “in the name of ——?”

It was only to be expected from a vicar that he should never use any bad words: and neither did he make a free use of those that are too good for common use, and which sound profane, even when authorized, as some people think, by his cloth. But he had a habit of going very near the edge, as if he were about to say them, which had often an impressive effect.

“Papa—I don’t know how to tell you—Jack has got engaged.”

“Oh, stop, Charles, stop! wait till you hear. Don’t say anything rash. To a lady whom he met in America (I knew there was some reason for his staying so long in America)—a lady—who is rolling in money, Charles!”

The vicar had his mouth opened to make a remark when he was stopped by his wife; indeed, he had more than half made it before

he could stop himself. "The confounded foo—!" Being arrested, he brought himself up with a run and a gasp.

"Wait till you hear it rightly!" cried his wife. "He met her in some out-of-the-way place; don't you remember he did say something about an out-of-the-way place, Emily? and fell in love with her. But poor boy, he was too honourable to speak. How could he, knowing he had nothing? It is that that has made him so unsettled. Didn't I always say there was something, Emily,—something we didn't know?"

"As for that," said the vicar, getting his breath, "there are probably hundreds of things we don't know."

"Oh, Charles, don't be so harsh; when now there is every appearance—— Her father has come over with her, and has called at the office. They've taken a house in the country, and they've asked Jack to stay with them."

"But more, more, far more!" cried Emily, crimson with excitement, "he has proposed—and has been accepted, papa."

"Are you sure you are not dreaming all this?" the vicar said. "Look again; there must be some mistake."

"There is no mistake at all; read it yourself," said Mrs. Wynyard, thrusting the letter into his hands. "Of course it is for you as much as me. He says a pretty creature, with those wonderful complexions American girls are said to have, and with Heaven only knows how much money; oh, I don't wonder your father is flurried; I cannot get my breath myself."

"It may be the making of him, mother!"

"If it isn't the other thing," Mrs. Wynyard said.

"How could it be the other thing? when we have always said between ourselves that a wife, a nice wife, who had sense——, if it were ever

possible that he could be able to marry, would be the saving of Jack ! ”

“ Ah, yes,” said Mrs. Wynyard, “ if he could have had an income to marry on—an income of his own ; but if the money is all on the woman’s side, and a father to look after her, to tie it up. Oh, it isn’t that I am for money, though I see the great, great advantage. But would she take all the trouble with him if it was like that ? ”

“ She would love to take the trouble,” said Emily. “ Could she be happy if he were not happy—and right ? ” she added in an undertone.

The vicar glanced over the letter while this conversation was going on. He did not read it line by line, but jumped at the meaning, having had it already explained to him. And for a moment his heart rose lightly in his breast. To have Jack provided for, suddenly made independent, no longer a trouble and

anxiety to everybody belonging to him, but with a home, an income, a keeper (so to speak) of his own! The vicar's heart gave a leap of relief and delight. No more responsibility. It would be his wife's business to look after him, and nobody could do that as well as a wife. And then the money. Even without the money, if there had been any chance that Jack could ever have enough to live upon, they had all been agreed that a wife might be the making of him. That meant, I fear, that she (poor soul! the problematical wife) would take the anxiety off the shoulders of his parents, that she would put herself between Jack and harm, and perhaps cure him, and bring him right—a thing which it is known women have undertaken to do, and have done *tant bien que mal*, and made life possible, before now. This was an aspiration they had all breathed, never expecting, however, that it would come to pass—and to see it suddenly realized, and with

money added, that would make it all the more sure! A beautiful vision rose before the vicar's mind—of a time when there would be no anxiety about Jack, no remittances to send him, no dreadful news of dismissal to be looked for, or any other anxiety of that kind; no call upon every available penny to make up for some misadventure: but peace and happiness, and some one to watch over him wherever he went. The money, indeed, was a great thing, but the guardian, the companion, the some one to watch over him, that was the thing of all.

But then the vicar put down the letter, and those heartstrings, which had so relaxed and been sensible of the happiest loosening and ease, tightened all at once again. He put his elbows on the table, and his face in his hands. The ladies were silent, thinking that he was thanking God. But, when he looked up after that pause, his face was not the face

of a man glorified by thanksgiving. The old lines were all drawn again round his anxious eyes.

“Jane,” he said, “and you, Emily, listen to me. We talk every day, don’t we, about doing to our neighbours as we would that our neighbours should do to us?”

“Surely,” said Mrs. Wynyard, a little dismayed, though she scarcely knew why: for to have her assent required to such a proposition, at such a moment, was the strangest thing in the world.

The vicar’s ruddy countenance had grown quite pale.

“If a man should come asking to marry Emily, and his people concealed—necessary facts from us—hoping she would be the saving of him——”

Then there passed a dreadful moment of silence in that glowing room, so bright with sunshine. The three looked in each other’s

faces—they were as if they had been struck dumb.

“Oh, Charles, Charles!” said Mrs. Wynyard, and began to cry; “Oh, *papa*!”

It was a name she still sometimes called him, in kindness, for the children’s sakes.

“Father,” said Emily, faltering, “in such cases people judge for themselves. They hate any one who interferes——”

“As you would that men should do unto you, do you also unto them,” the vicar replied.

“If it was my case,” she cried, colouring high, “I should not believe a word!”

“Oh, *papa*,” repeated his wife, “*papa*! you will not say anything! Your own son, and perhaps the only hope.”

“Father, if he was responsible for a woman’s happiness—he has never had any responsibility: and if he loses her—as he says——”

“And he always had the kindest heart!” cried Mrs. Wynyard, among her tears.

"Get me the time-table," said the vicar ; "at least they must judge for themselves. I am going to town by the next train."

II.

THE vicar was asked into a handsome room in a hotel somewhere in Mayfair. He had got the address from Jack, who gave it with suspicion and reluctance, not knowing what his father could mean, or what he wanted dashing up to town like this.

"Do you mean to tell me you're engaged to Miss Boldero ?" the vicar said.

"Why, yes ; of course we are engaged. Should I have written to the mater about it, do you think, if it hadn't been true ? But you never believe a word I say," Jack answered, with a certain defiance.

"I believe this, Jack, since you say it to

my face. Does this girl know anything about you?"

"This girl! You might be more civil to my betrothed. Of course she knows everything she has any call to know about me——"

"And she has a father?"

"She has a father," said Jack, beginning to feel there was trouble in the air.

"It is right that he and I should talk the matter over," said the vicar.

"If it's about money," said Jack, more and more alarmed, "they know I've got no money; there is no use entering upon that."

"There is use in entering upon—a great many things," the vicar said.

"Father, what do you mean? You are not going to—you don't mean to—spoil my chance!" cried the young man, "the only chance I ever may have in my life!"

The vicar said nothing. He gave his boy a look that silenced Jack. When had his

father spoiled a chance, or taken a hope away from him? But there was nothing more to be said to him now.

It was a handsome room for a room in a hotel, being the best; and in the corner near the great window which commanded a glimpse of Piccadilly, there was seated a young lady alone—a tall girl, with fair hair frizzed upon her forehead, an unexceptionable toilette, and a clear-cut imperious face. There is something a little faulty, something peculiar, in the American mouth. Heaven knows all our mouths are faulty in all nations—it is the peccant feature everywhere. In France they say it of the English, whose long teeth are a frequent subject of mockery: but the American mouth has a character specially its own. It is a little harsh, the merest trifle in the world underhanging—nay, too slight for any such decided expression; let us say with the under lip the least in the world protruding beyond its fellow—

“Her lips were thin,
Except the one was next the chin.”

But, on the other hand, that is too complimentary, for the underlip was as thin as the other, only put forward a hair's breadth. It is the result, I suppose, in the young feminine subject of having things too much her own way. She was looking at the vicar's card, which he had sent up, when he entered the room, and she said, with a little start, but without rising—

“Mr. Wynyard, Leighton-Furness Vicarage. Goodness! You are Jack's papa!”

“Yes, I am Jack's papa,” said the vicar, half astonished, half confused—half, nay, not half, for three halves cannot be—but the very least bit amused. He took the hand she held out to him and held it for a moment. She looked a creature who might do this thing—imperious, not hesitating or counting the cost, whatever she might take into her head.

"And you also have a papa," said the vicar.

"Yes; I suppose Jack has told you all about us—how we met him, and how we did this bold thing and came after him here?"

"He did not say you had come after him. I should have been very angry if he had."

"Why? it is quite true. I liked him—I don't feel the least ashamed—better than any man I have seen; and I thought, perhaps, it was the money kept him back. You are so ridiculously poor in this country. Why are you so poor? So we came after him, papa and I——"

"Was papa aware of—of what I may call the object of the journey?" said the vicar, not knowing whether to laugh out, which, perhaps, she would not have liked, or what to do.

"Oh," said this young lady, "I never hide anything from papa."

"He is not in, I fear," said the vicar.

"Yes, he is in; do you want him? Tell me

first before I let you see him what are you going to tell him about Jack ? ”

“ My dear young lady, the two fathers must certainly be permitted to talk such a matter over.”

“ No,” said the girl, “ unless you tell me first what you are going to tell him about Jack.”

“ I am going to speak to him very seriously,” said the vicar. “ It is a very serious thing to confide the happiness of a girl like you to a young man you scarcely know.”

“ Oh ! ” she said, “ that’s taking it the wrong way about—confiding his happiness to me, you mean. Oh, I am not at all afraid ; I’ll make him happy. You need not make yourself miserable about that.”

The vicar pressed his hat—a hat which had a rosette, as somebody has said, a sort of daisy in it, for he was a rural dean, whatever that may be—between his hands. The girl’s eyes were fixed upon that little symbol of ecclesi-

astical rank. She interrupted him before he could say any more.

"What is that for?—that thing in your hat? You are perfectly delightful for a papa-in-law. You make me more and more satisfied that I came."

"My dear," said the vicar, feeling that his virtue was stealing away from him under these blandishments, "I must see your father."

"Why?" she said. "I am sure I will do better. It is I that am to marry Jack, and not father. I'll hear what you have got to say."

"I called on Mr. Boldero," he said, more and more anxiously; "permit me to ring and ask if he is in the hotel."

"Oh, he is in the next room," she said, "but he would not come in, of course, when he heard I was talking to somebody. Father!" she said, raising her voice.

A door opened, and a tall man put in his head. "Do you want me, Childie?" he said.

"I don't want you ; but here is a gentleman who wants you. It is Mr. Wynyard, papa ; Jack's father."

"I am happy to make your acquaintance, sir," said Mr. Boldero.

Both father and daughter spoke with an accent which was extremely piquant to the vicar. He had scarcely ever encountered any of their country-folk before, and he was extremely curious about them, and would, had his mind been less deeply engaged, have been greatly amused and delighted with their unaccustomed ways. Mr. Boldero was clad very solemnly in black, and doubtless had other peculiarities besides his accent ; but the vicar was not at sufficient ease to remark them.

"I heard only this morning," he said, "of the engagement—if it is an engagement—between your daughter and my son Jack : and I came up to town instantly to see you."

"If it is an engagement!" said Miss Boldero with indignation.

"Well, sir, and have you any objection?" said the other father.

"Will you grant me an interview, Mr. Boldero?"

"With pleasure; isn't this an interview? Fire away," said Miss Boldero's papa.

The vicar did not know what to say. He sat still for a moment with the spirit gone out of him. Then he murmured almost with a supplicating tone, "I meant a private interview, Mr. Boldero."

"Oh," said the American, "I have no secrets from my Childie here. She's full of sense, and always gives me her advice. Besides, if it is anything about Jack, it is she that has the best right to hear."

The poor vicar stared blankly in the face of this man, who, being a man and his own contemporary, ought surely to have understood

him. He had thought that no man could have been more surprised than he had been this morning by the news of Jack's engagement. But he was more surprised now.

"My dear sir," he said, "it is impossible that I can say what I have to say in the presence of Miss Boldero——"

"Oh, never mind me," said the young lady. "He has come to tell you something against Jack, papa. I ought to be here——"

"It will be more fair," said Mr. Boldero.

"It is just simply indispensable," said his daughter.

The vicar felt the obstinacy of despair come into his being. He said—

"This is a very serious matter; I must talk to you alone. For Heaven's sake grant me ten minutes when your child's happiness is at stake. It is not all such easy work, such plain sailing as you seem to think."

"Father," said Miss Boldero, "if he tells you

Jack has another wife living or anything of that sort, promise me you'll not believe him."

She raised herself slowly from her seat.

"No, I'll not believe him without proof."

"I shan't, with volumes of proof. But I'll go away, though I consider it very uncivil and just like an Englishman to treat a woman in this contemptuous way. You said ten minutes, Mr. Wynyard. I'll come back in ten minutes to hear what all this fuss is about."

The young lady retired accordingly. She had a fine, graceful figure, and moved languidly, swinging a little to one side and another as some tall people do; and she went no further than to the next room, where it would not have been difficult to hear all that passed. But one could not see that young person and suspect her of listening at a door.

"Well," said Mr. Boldero, "out with it now. Is there another wife living? I'll have to see all the papers before I'll believe that of Jack."

"Another wife!" cried the vicar. "God bless my soul, what can you be thinking of? Jack is not a villain!"

"Then there is not another wife? Well, that's a relief. What was a man to think? You're so dreadfully in earnest. If it ain't that, it's all right."

"But it is not all right," said the vicar. "Mr. Boldero, do you know my son has not a penny?—that is, there will be a mere trifle when we are both dead, his mother and I; but she's young yet, thank God. Stop a moment! And he is only a clerk in my friend Bullock's office, earning little, and, it breaks my heart to say, deserving little."

"An idle young dog; more fond of pleasure than of work. One can see as much as that, having, as you may say, the pleasure of his acquaintance, with half an eye."

"And there is more behind," said the vicar, very pale. "Don't make me blame my own

boy more than I can help. God knows what it costs me to speak, but I can't let—the happiness of another young creature—be thrown away.”

“Meaning Childie,” said Mr. Boldero. “She’s pretty well able to look after that herself. Hullo! you’re not feeling faint, are you? Stop a moment; I’ve got something handy here.”

“Never mind,” said the vicar, waving him away. “Never mind; I’m all right. Mr. Boldero, do you understand what I say? Can I say anything stronger to make you understand? I dare not let you trust your daughter’s happiness to Jack without telling you——”

“Here, old man, take this, and sit down and keep quiet till you come to yourself.”

And to tell the truth a mist was coming over the vicar’s eyes. He laid his head back, and the room seemed to be gyrating round him. His heart was beating loud in his ears, and the

tall figure standing before him with a glass in its hand seemed some kind of solemn demon tempting him to an unknown fate. He swallowed what was given to him, however, and slowly came to himself—the walls sinking into the perpendicular, and the tall American in his black coat becoming recognizable once more.

“You want to know, now, I suppose,” said the other father, “how the young folks are to live? I’m pretty comfortably off, and she’s all I have in the world.”

“Are you sure you understand me? Do you know what I mean?” said the vicar in despair.

“I know what you say fast enough; but what you mean is beyond me: unless it be to put a spoke in your son’s wheel: which is more than I can understand, I’ll allow.”

The vicar did not say a word. They would think it at home, too, that he had tried to put a

spoke in his son's wheel; and Jack would think it with more reason. But he felt that he had not another word to say.

"Have you got anything more to tell me in this hole-and-corner way?" the other father asked.

The vicar shook his head. "What does it matter what I have to say, when you won't believe me?" he said.

"Then I reckon I may as well have her back. Here, Childie," said Mr. Boldero.

And the door opened widely, and the young lady sailed in. "Well, papa," she said.

"Well, Childie. This old gentleman wants us to understand that his son is a bad lot, earns no money to speak of, and deserves less; is just good for nothing as far as I can make him out, not fit to be trusted with your happiness, he says."

"Father," said Miss Boldero, "who is talking of trusting Jack with my happiness? Is it the

woman that asks the man to make her happy, or the man that asks the woman ? ”

“ As a matter of fact it’s the man ; but I don’t know that it always holds good. I must allow there is a doubt on that.”

“ There is no doubt in my mind,” said the young lady. “ Jack’s happiness is going to be trusted to me, and I’ll take care of it. If Mr. Wynyard has any objection to me he has got a right to say it.”

“ I ain’t quite so clear of that,” said Mr. Boldero. “ Jack’s of age ; he’s a man, and he has a right to choose for himself. The old gentleman has no call to have any voice in it.”

Now, the vicar had gone on for a long time hearing himself called the “ old gentleman,” and had borne it ; though at sixty, when a man is well and strong, it is an appellation which he feels to be half ludicrous and half injurious. But at last the moment had come when he could bear no more.

"The old gentleman," he said, "as you call me, has no desire to have a veto on his son's choice. You are a very pretty young lady, and charming, I am sure. But I don't know what are your other qualities, Miss Boldero. You must excuse me if I go now, for I have said everything I have to say."

"Go!" cried the girl, "without even having your luncheon!—you, who are going to be my papa-in-law?"

"Or a drink," said her father. "Yes, I had to give him a drink, or he would have fainted on my hands. Sir—if I must not call you an old gentleman—I'm a great one for knowing motives. What was your meaning in coming here to-day?"

"His meaning, of course, was to make acquaintance with me, papa, and see what sort of girl I was."

"Childie, let alone with your talk for one short moment, and let him speak."

The vicar stood up, and would have gone away if he could ; but the tall, black figure opposite barred the way, and demanded an answer. And, indeed, the answer was hard to give ; for a man somehow finds it very hard to say that he has done anything, whatever it may be, simply from the highest motive of all. The vicar felt this deeply, though he was an old gentleman, and though to be religious was, as you may say, his profession. He was often not at all abashed to avow a mean motive ; but when you think of it, it requires a great deal of courage to claim to be carrying out the charge of the Gospel. When he spoke his voice faltered, and his ruddy old face was like a rose. " Sir," he replied, adopting, without knowing it, the style of his questioner, " I have been preaching all my life what my Master said, ' Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them.' "

There was a little pause in the room, and

though the rattle of the carriages in the streets, and the sound of the men with the flowers calling, "All a-blowing and a-growing," came in very distinctly, yet the effect was as if you could have heard a pin fall. The boldest held his breath for a time—that is to say, even Miss Boldero, though she was not quite clear what it was all about, did not say a word. At last—

"That gentleman's Jack's father, Childie," said Mr. Boldero slowly. "I'm not in the running with the likes of him. If you don't train that fellow up to do his father credit, I'll never believe in you again."

"I will, papa," said the girl, as if she were making a vow.

* * * * *

Jack Wynyard strolled in in the afternoon, very carefully dressed, with a flower in his coat, but with much trouble in his mind. Why did his father come up to town so suddenly? What was it he was so anxious to say? The

young man's conscience told him pretty clearly what it was, and he went to the hotel to fulfil



"JACK."

his engagement with his betrothed, expecting little but to be met by her father, and sent

about his business, as the result of what his own father had said.

But no such reception awaited him. He found Miss Boldero in her prettiest toilette waiting for him. "And oh, Jack," said that young lady, "there has been the sweetest old gentleman here with a button in his hat, saying all sorts of things about you. He said you were not fit to be trusted with my happiness, and I said no; but I was to be trusted with yours. And we are going down to the vicarage to stay; do you hear, to stay, and make acquaintance with everything. And papa has fallen fathoms deep in love with him. And you are to behave, sir, like a saint or an angel, or I will lose all my credit with everybody from this day."

The vicar went home, I need not say, with a load lifted from his heart. He had delivered his soul, and yet he had not injured Jack. But that was because the people whom he had

warned, in the discharge of his bounden duty, were such people as never were.

“They know everything at least,” he said to his wife and Emily, who met him with much anxiety at the gate, both of them looking ten years older. “I have not concealed anything from them. But how it will all end God knows.”

GENERAL PASSAVANT'S WILL.

By GRANT ALLEN.



I.

WE three girls had always been brought up to expect we would come into Grandpapa Passavant's money. But there!—poor dear grandpapa, though he was the very sweetest old man that ever lived, was stuck as full of prejudices all over as a porcupine is stuck full of quills. He literally bristled with them. He was always flaring up at some unexpected point. And what was worse, his family had, almost every one of them, managed to annoy him by running counter to his pet hobbies, for no better reason on earth than just because they wanted to

marry the men or women they loved themselves, instead of marrying the people poor



GENERAL PASSAVANT.

grandpapa in his wisdom would have chosen to select for them. It was really a most unfor-

fortunate affair all round: one would say a Passavant couldn't manage to fall in love with anybody anywhere without treading on one of poor dear grandpapa's very tenderest corns.

There was Aunt Emily—for example—*she* married an Austrian hussar; a very nice man to be sure, and a Graf or something, at that; but, somehow, dear grandpapa never could abide him. He was military to the core, was grandpapa, with a fine old crusted British dislike of “Frenchmen”—which was his brief description for foreigners in general: a pretty thing, he used to say, this marrying of people in an enemy's service! Why, any day a European war might happen to break out, in which case we might be compelled to take sides against Austria (though it doesn't look likely, I must confess); and then, where would Emily be? Why, we should all be fighting against our own brothers-in-law and

sons-in-law! Preposterous! Absurd! "Depend upon it, Ethel, my dear," he used to say to me, stroking my front hair with his gentle old hand—for he was a dear old man, mind you, in spite of his prejudices—"depend upon it, Ethel, an Englishwoman's business is to marry an Englishman—a fine, strapping young fellow—and make him happy. What husband can you see among all those outlandish, jabbering, undersized foreigners to equal a British soldier—an officer and a gentleman?" For poor grandpapa's ideas never travelled one inch outside the Army List. That any girl of his could care to marry a curate, for example, or a barrister, or an artist, or a doctor, was a notion that never even so much as occurred to his dear old military head as for one moment possible.

Then there was Aunt Charlotte: *she* married a Scotchman. That was a harder blow still to poor grandpapa; for he hated the Scotch, and

he hated the Welsh, and he hated lawyers, and he hated Presbyterians ; and Aunt Charlotte's husband was a member of the General Assembly, and a Writer to the Signet. Grandpapa never quite grasped what the Signet was, or why any one should write to it, but he always alluded to Mr. Greig's profession with bitter contempt. There are no such things as Writers to the Signet in England, I believe ; and grandpapa considered everything un-English as too barbarous and low for his mind to dwell upon.

But poor dear Aunt Louisa had the worst luck of all. *She* married a Portuguese Jew, who was a member of the Stock Exchange. That cut poor grandpapa to the very quick ; for Mr. Da Costa wasn't undersized at all : he was six feet two, and as handsome as a sculptor's model. Grandpapa never could bear even to mention Aunt Louisa's name to us ; though he was very kind and good to her, and

to Mr. Da Costa, too ; and, when he died, he left her ten thousand pounds—the same sum he left to his other daughters—“ as a slight token,” he said in his will, “ of Christian forgiveness.” ’Twas a very hard wrench, but poor grandpapa bore it with manful resignation. He was accustomed to wrenches, he said, for one arm was amputated.

My father, however, who was a Colonel of Engineers, rejoiced the General's heart by marrying, as he ought, an Englishwoman, and a member of the Church of England. And though dear grandpapa never quite forgave us for being girls instead of boys, he was very proud and fond of us, and loved to contrast us (very much to our advantage) with those flat-faced little Germans, and that raw-boned young Malcolm Greig—for he never so much as deigned to allude in any way to poor little curly-headed Montague Da Costa.

So when, in course of time, dear grandpapa

died, and his will was opened, we were not at all surprised to find he left a comparatively small sum to papa, and twenty thousand pounds apiece to his beloved grand-daughters, Linda, Maud, and Ethel.

But there was a condition attached—a condition so awfully like dear grandpapa! “Provided always,” the will went on in each case, “my said grand-daughter abstains from marrying any of the three persons following—to wit, *firstly*, an alien, whether naturalized or otherwise; that is to say, any man who is not a natural-born subject of Her Majesty Queen Victoria: *secondly*, a Presbyterian; that is to say, a member of the Established Church of Scotland: or, *thirdly*, a sworn broker of the City of London. And in case my said grand-daughter Linda,” for example, “should break this stipulation; and marry any of the persons so excepted, then and in that case I will and devise that she shall forfeit all claim to the

said sum of twenty thousand pounds, Consolidated Three per Cent. Annuities, standing in the name of my said trustees, which sum shall thereafter be divided into two equal moieties of ten thousand pounds each, whereof my executors shall pay over one moiety to my grand-daughter Maud, and the other moiety to my grand-daughter Ethel, for their own sole use and benefit."

II.

PAPA read the will over to us a few days after poor grandpapa's funeral, and explained what it meant in plain English, for of course we girls couldn't understand just at first all the legal technicalities. However, we knew, at any rate, we were now heiresses in a small way; and papa put it clearly to us that, as we had no mother (I forgot to say she died when I was five years old), we must be very careful, on our

own account, not to let ourselves get entangled in foolish engagements with interested fortune-hunters. We must avoid young men who made themselves agreeable to us. But above all, he insisted—since poor grandpapa had willed it so—we must take particular notice not to fall in love, whatever might happen, with foreigners, Presbyterians, or members of the Stock Exchange.

That was easy enough to promise, I thought, for (being grandpapa's grand-daughter, you see) I hate Germans, I detest the Scotch, and I simply and solely abominate City men. So I made up my mind that, whatever the others did, I at least would keep a good hold over my own twenty thousand, letting Linda and Maud, in their various romantic ways, behave as they might with their separate portions.

Half an hour after papa had finished explaining the position to us, however, I was sitting in my own room, making day-dreams after my

fashion, when suddenly there came a nervous little knock at the door, and, to my great surprise, enter Linda, excited. I could see at a glance the poor girl was very much flurried about something, for her face was pale, and her eyes were red; besides which, she instantly turned the key in the door in a most resolute way, and flung herself upon the bed as if her heart was breaking. Though Linda was four years older than me, she always came to me in all her troubles.

“Oh! Ethel,” she cried, between her sobs, “this is too, too dreadful. I’ve been leading him to suppose for months that . . . well, that, if anything was ever to happen to poor dear grandpapa, he and I could be married; and now—this hateful, hateful will! I can’t bear it. I can’t endure it. How can I ever tell him?”

I was utterly taken by surprise. I didn’t know who she meant. I could hardly believe

my ears. Linda engaged to somebody for months before, and me never to have observed it! Never even to have suspected who on earth she was speaking of! This was almost incredible.

"*Him!*" I exclaimed, bewildered. "Why, who's he, Linda? I haven't the remotest notion who it is you're talking about."

Linda raised her head, open-mouthed, and gazed across at me, half-incredulous. "You don't mean to say, dear," she cried, with a sort of spasm of surprise, "you've never even noticed it!"

"Never, dearest," I answered sincerely, holding her hand and smoothing it. "Who is it? Mr. Mackinnon?" For he was really the only Scotchman of our acquaintance I could remember at the moment as at all a likely person for Linda to fall in love with.

"Mr. Mackinnon!" Linda repeated, half-angrily. "Mr. Mackinnon—indeed! Well,

really, Ethel, I do think you might give me credit for better taste than that! No, it isn't Mr. Mackinnon. I wouldn't for worlds say a word about it to Maud—she'd be so unkind and unfeeling: she never cared for him; but I can trust *you*, dear, I'm sure: you're always so sympathetic, and I just *must* tell somebody. Well, for eight months past—I wonder you never guessed it—I've been engaged quite quietly to Charlie Vanrenen. Only, on poor grandpapa's account, both Charlie and I thought it was better for the present to say nothing about it."

Before I could answer there came a knock at the door again, and I heard Maud's voice saying, in a very cold, despairing way, "Ethel, let me in, please: I want to speak at once with you!"

Linda started up with a perfectly tragic air. "Oh, send her away, dear!" she cried, in a low, tremulous tone. "If *she* were to find out

what I was saying, I could never, never, never marry poor Charlie ! ”

“ You can’t come in just now, Maud,” I answered, going over to the door ; and, speaking through the keyhole, “ I’m—I’m writing letters.” But that was a fib—I hope and trust a harmless one. “ Come back again in half an hour, there’s a dear, and I’ll accept your confidences.”

And I went over to the bed once more and tried my best to soothe down Linda. “ Why, what’s the matter,” I asked, leaning over her and wiping her eyes, “ with poor Mr. Vanrenen ? He isn’t a German, and he isn’t a Dutchman ; he isn’t a Presbyterian, and he isn’t a stockbroker. Why on earth should poor grandpapa’s will interfere with you in any way ? I understood Mr. Vanrenen was some sort of a writing person—a journalist, don’t they call it ? And poor grandpapa, though his prejudices were sufficiently comprehensive,

never made any express stipulation against the literature of our country."

But Linda began to cry again, even more bitterly than before. "Yes, Charlie's a newspaper man," she said, through her tears; "he's on the European edition of the New York *Tribune*: and he's been brought up in England; and he's as English in every way as you or I are; and he only earns about three hundred a year, and he couldn't marry on *that*. But, Ethel, the dreadful thing of it all is this—he's an American citizen, and he's never been naturalized!"

I pursed my lips. It was clear at once this was a hopeless case. There was nothing for it but to comfort her and condole with her. And I comforted her with all the consolation in my power. As far as *I* was concerned, I said, *my* share in her twenty thousand pounds—— But at that poor Linda grew absolutely hysterical. It was with difficulty I quieted her down by



"NAUD SEATED HERSELF WITH GREAT DIGNITY IN THE EASY CHAIR, FOLDED HER HANDS IN FRONT OF HER,

degrees, and got her off at last to her own room to write a ten-page letter on the subject to "Charlie."

III.

THE moment she was gone, Maud, who had evidently been listening at her own door to hear mine open and let Linda out, came sweeping in, like a duchess in distress, pale and calm, but profoundly miserable. She seated herself with great dignity in the easy-chair, folded her hands in front of her like a marble statue, and stared at me fixedly for several minutes in solemn silence.

"Well, this is a dreadful thing," she said at last, with an evident effort, "about poor grandpapa's will! I'm sure I don't know how on earth, after this crushing blow, I shall ever have the courage to face him and tell him!"

"Tell who? Tell him what?" I exclaimed, bewildered once more; for I certainly never suspected such a cold creature as Maud of being in love with anybody.

Maud gazed back at me with the tranquillity of utter despair. "Don't pretend you don't know, Ethel," she cried, in a very frigid voice. "It isn't any use. You *must* have noticed it."

"Not Mr. Vanrenen!" I cried, perhaps just a trifle mischievously.

The curl of Maud's lip would have been a study for Sarah Bernhardt. "Well, really, Ethel," she said, bridling up, "at a moment like *this* you might at least spare me from positive insult! Mr. Vanrenen, indeed! That affected idiot! I should be very hard up for a lover, I'm sure, if I allowed Mr. Vanrenen to presume upon proposing to me. . . . But you surely must know! You can't possibly have overlooked it! There's only one man on

earth I'd ever dream of accepting. . . . I wouldn't tell Linda for worlds—Linda's so sympathetic. But you're always kind. I don't mind confessing it in this crisis to you—for it *is* a crisis. . . . I've been engaged for six weeks past to Malcolm Mackinnon."

"But he can join the Church of England," I said, coolly; for I'm afraid I must confess, being a worldly creature, I didn't think the difference worth losing a wife for.

"No, no, my dear, he can't," Maud answered, with an air of resignation. "That's just the worst of it. His father's something or other in the high legal way to the General Assembly—Assessor, or what-not—and Malcolm's agent for the legal business in London. If he were to give up the Kirk, he'd lose his place, and his father might too, for it would be quite a scandal in Edinburgh. And he's only a junior partner, and he's too poor to marry. But I'll wait for him for ever, Ethel, grandpapa or no

grandpapa ; and I'll marry him when I choose. And I'll give up everything on earth for him ; and you and Linda are welcome to your money, I'm sure ; for I mean to marry Malcolm if he hasn't a ha'penny ! ”

I couldn't have believed it of Maud. But I rushed up to her and kissed her.

She sat there for half an hour, as cold as ice, and then went off in turn to write the news to “ Malcolm.” And as soon as she was gone I sat down and cried a little by myself for both of them. But, I must confess, I reflected with pride that the whole episode did the family credit. I was glad the two girls should have made up their mind to marry poor men, when they might have gone in, if they wished, for position or money ; and I made up my mind at the same time that I, at least, would avoid the very first approach of aliens, Presbyterians, and members of the Stock Exchange. It's so very much easier not to fall in love at first

than, having fallen in love once, to fall out again comfortably.

IV.

For the next few weeks life was a burden to me. I lived in a perpetual state of receiving alternate confidences from Linda and Maud, and endeavouring to conceal from each the other's position. This was distinctly hard, but I pulled it through somehow. And I applauded each in turn in her firm resolution that, come what might, she would never give up her Charlie or her Malcolm.

Fortunately, I myself was *not* engaged. Forewarned was forearmed. I was in a position, I thought, to give a wide berth now to all classes of men expressly included in poor grandpapa's interdict.

However, it was only about six weeks later

that I met at the Markwells' a most charming young man, who really paid me a great deal of attention. I liked him from the very first, though I pretended I didn't. His name was Kirkwood, and he was a struggling artist. Now, artists had always for me a certain romantic interest; and, do you know, it may be silly of me, but somehow I never could bear to marry a man unless he were struggling. I can't say why; but well-to-do men always *did* repel me—they put my back up. I hate their smug, self-satisfied air, and I love the actuality, so to speak, of the struggling classes. Men who work for their living are always more real to me. Besides, Mr. Kirkwood was so retiring and unassuming; and I knew why. He liked me very much—I could see plainly from the very first; but he'd heard that I was an heiress, and he didn't want to marry me, because I had money. That's the only kind of man I should ever care myself to marry;

and I won't deny to you—in confidence—I thought a great deal, for the next ten days or so, in the solitude of my own room, about that delightful Mr. Kirkwood.

A stockbroker, indeed! With five thousand a year! Fancy marrying a stockbroker, in a world where there are men who can paint such beautiful things as he did—and live on next to nothing! It would be simply ridiculous.

Still, I wasn't going to be taken by surprise. I wouldn't allow myself, even, to begin falling in love the tiniest little bit in the world with that charming painter—at least, I thought not—before I'd satisfied myself thoroughly that he was a natural-born subject of her Majesty the Queen, and a member of the Church of England as by law established. Both those points I satisfactorily got out of him in the course of conversation; and then I made up my mind that, come what would, papa or no papa, if Mr. Kirkwood asked me—why, I

wouldn't think it necessary to say "No" outright to him.

One afternoon, some weeks later, to my great delight, Mr. Kirkwood asked us all three to go round to his studio, with Mrs. Markwell and Bella to do the proprieties for us. Well, Linda refused ; but Maud and I went, and he showed us his pictures—oh, such lovely pictures! though I'm sorry to say he hardly ever sold them. And Mrs. Markwell was *so* kind ; she stopped behind in one room with the other two girls, while he took me into another behind it, to show me the piece he was then at work upon.

I don't remember much about that piece, I admit, though it was really lovely, for he talked to me a great deal about other subjects—mostly our two selves, I fancy—yet not at all as if he were making love to me. He spoke rather regretfully, as if he liked me very much, but could never ask me. And I knew very



"THESE ARE CLEVER," I SAID, LOOKING AT HIS SKETCHES."

well why. I saw it in his face. It was that horrid money that stood between us.

How I wished I was penniless—if Mr. Kirkwood preferred it so!

At last he took down a portfolio of sketches from a cabinet in the corner, and showed them to me by the window. They were earlier sketches than any I had yet seen of his—done evidently before he had taken to art as a regular profession. "These are clever," I said, looking at them with my head on one side, and pretending to be critical; "but they haven't such a sense of *technique*, I fancy, as the ones in the studio." I thought "sense of *technique*" was decidedly good, and, like a girl that I was, I wanted to impress him with my knowledge of things artistic.

"Well, no," he said, smiling, and looking hard into my eyes; "those are early attempts. They were done, don't you know, when I was still on the Stock Exchange."

I gave a sudden start. "On the Stock Exchange!" I cried, puzzled, and just a wee bit tremulous. "You don't mean to tell me, Mr. Kirkwood, you were ever on the Stock Exchange?"

"Oh yes, I was," he answered, in the most matter-of-fact tone on earth. "But I did no good at it, you know; I'm not cut out for business. I was always daubing or making thumb-nail sketches when I ought to have been watching the rise and fall of stocks. So I left it at last as a bad job, and took to painting instead, which is my natural *métier*; though, of course, I'm still theoretically and legally a sworn broker of the City of London."

I turned so pale at those words that he looked at me in surprise. "That's very awkward!" I cried, taken aback, and trembling violently. Then I grew fiery red, for I saw in a moment I'd put my foot in it.

"Why awkward?" he asked, coming closer

and looking hard in my face. "You're faint, Miss Passavant! You're trembling! Let me run and get you a glass of water."

"Not for worlds," I cried, stammering and trying to recover myself. "I only meant——"

He seized my hand, and held it tight. He guessed the truth, I think. At any rate, he quivered. "You must tell me!" he cried. "Oh! Miss Passavant, what is it?"

"By my grandfather's will," I began; then I stopped and faltered.

He let my hand drop short. "Oh yes, I forgot," he said, in a disappointed tone; "I should have remembered that before; I shouldn't have dared to approach you."

I saw what he meant in a second, and I felt I really *must* tell him now. "But by my grandfather's will," I gasped out, in an agony of shame, remorse, and terror—for I felt it was horribly unwomanly of me to have let him see like that into my very heart—"we were to

forfeit it all if we—oh! Mr. Kirkwood, I can't say it—if we any of us married an alien, a Presbyterian—or a sworn broker.”

Before I knew where I was, something strange had happened. He was holding me in his arms, and pressing me tight to his breast. He was covering me with kisses. “Ethel—my Ethel!” he cried; “then it's all right, after all! You'll have no money! And you'll never mind! I know you'll be mine! What's money to you and me? With *you* to help me, I'm sure I can earn enough for both of us. It was only that horrid, horrid shadow that stood between us!”

I knew he was right, so I stood still and allowed him.

Two minutes later Mrs. Markwell came in upon us. I suppose I looked horribly flushed and flurried; but I understood I was engaged to Arthur Kirkwood.

V.

NEXT day I made a clean breast of it all to Maud. She listened in silence, in that calm, cold way of hers; then she took my hand in hers, and, to my immense surprise, kissed me most affectionately. "Ethel," she said, with a burst, "I always knew you were a brick! I knew you'd follow the guidance of your own heart. But Linda's so different. *She'll* never fall in love, you may be sure, with any one on earth who could possibly come under poor grandpapa's prohibitions. She's absolutely mercenary!"

In the astonishment of the moment I blurted out the whole truth. "Why, Maud," I exclaimed, "you're awfully unjust to her! She's in love already—and with an American, too—an alien—a foreigner—well, there, Mr. Vanrenen."

It was a shocking breach of confidence, I admit ; and the moment I'd let the words pass my lips I regretted it bitterly. But Maud drew back like one stung ; then she jumped up with a sudden air of resolve. " If that's so," she said quickly, in quite a hopeful tone, " I must see Malcolm immediately. Malcolm will tell us ; he's so clever, Malcolm is. I see a way out, I think. But you're quite sure of this thing about Linda, are you, Ethel ? "

" As certain as I am about you and Mr. Mackinnon, Maud," I replied, all bewildered. " Though I don't see what difference that can possibly make to you and me, dear."

Instead of answering, Maud looked at me hard once more, in her calmly contemptuous way—Maud had always a very low opinion of my humble intellect. Then she rose at once, and swept out of the room, with her train behind her, leaving me in utter wonder as to what on earth she could be driving at.

That very afternoon, as soon as lunch was finished, Maud asked Linda and myself to go out for a stroll in Kensington Gardens. From the way she asked it, we saw at once she had something definite in view ; and, though Linda was the eldest, when Maud asked us in her grand manner to go anywhere, or do anything, we other two girls would as soon have dreamt of refusing to obey her as of refusing to obey a judge in ermine. So we followed her blindly through Palace Gardens, and past the Round Pond, and along the path to the seat under the trees by the Speke Memorial.

As we reached the seat, somebody got up and raised his hat to greet us. He was expecting us, clearly. I saw at a glance it was Mr. Mackinnon.

Maud took his hand in hers without a gleam of recognition, yet I could see he held it a *little* bit longer than was absolutely necessary. "You got my note, then?" she said, in her com-

manding voice. "And you've looked this matter up for us, Malcolm?"

"Yes, Maud," Mr. Mackinnon answered, just a trifle confused, and glancing askance from her to me and Linda.

"Oh, never mind the girls," Maud said, quietly, with a little wave of her hand. "They're all in the same box, you see. They won't turn back upon us. Tell us quite plainly what the law is in the matter."

"Well, I've consulted the will," Mr. Mackinnon replied, drawing an envelope from his pocket; "and I've consulted the authorities, and the result is, I find, that if your sister Linda marries Mr. Vanrenen——"

"Oh, Ethel, how could you!" Linda cried, turning towards me one red flush, and drawing back several paces in a tragic attitude.

But Mr. Mackinnon took no notice of her. "And if your sister Ethel marries Mr. Kirkwood," he went on; "and if, finally, you

marry me, why, then, according to your grandfather's will, which the Courts would certainly uphold in every particular, your sister Linda's share must be divided equally between you and Ethel; your sister Ethel's share must be divided equally between you and Linda; and your share must be divided equally between the other two. So, you see, it cancels out. Each of you'll get just the same in the end, and all will come square, as if there were no restriction."

"Malcolm," Maud said, emphatically, moving back a step and surveying him from head to foot with supreme satisfaction, "I call you a Daniel come to judgment—yea, a Daniel! This is just delightful."

"And what's more," Mr. Mackinnon went on, looking from one of us to the other, "the arrangement would in every way be a most satisfactory one: for the original bequests are left under trust, and subject to many most

vexatious restrictions ; while the reversions, by a singular oversight, are absolute, and for your own sole use and benefit."

"Girls," Maud said, triumphantly, "you hear him. This is capital. Do you agree to marry and make this redistribution?"

"Certainly," I answered, without an instant's hesitation. "And so will you, Linda, as soon as you've had time to make out what it's all driving at."

I never saw a man more astonished in my life than poor dear papa when we explained to him the decision at which we'd all arrived. And I never saw a man more baffled either than Arthur Kirkwood when he found out that he'd have to take me after all, burdened with a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, which he'd never expected. It lost him such a chance of romantic poverty with the girl he loved that I really believe, if he hadn't been very much in love with me indeed, he'd have thrown

me overboard at once, and started afresh in quest of a penniless damsel. But he managed to put up with it for my sake, he said, and you can see me as his Rosalind in this year's Academy.



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